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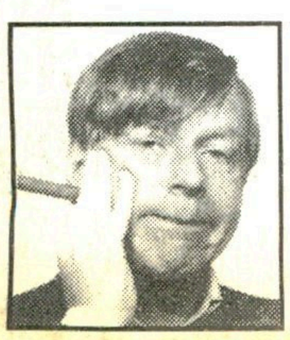

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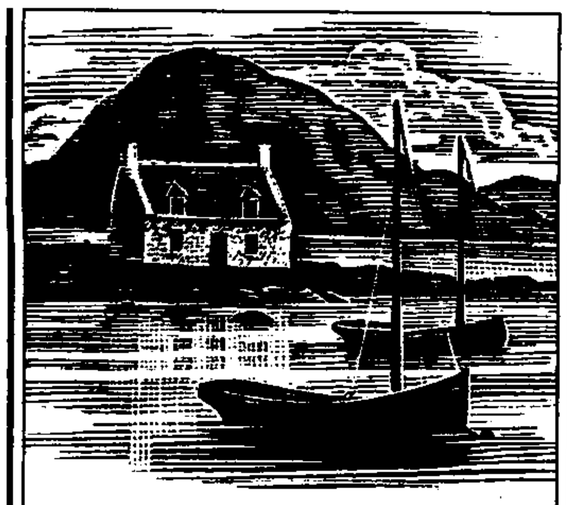

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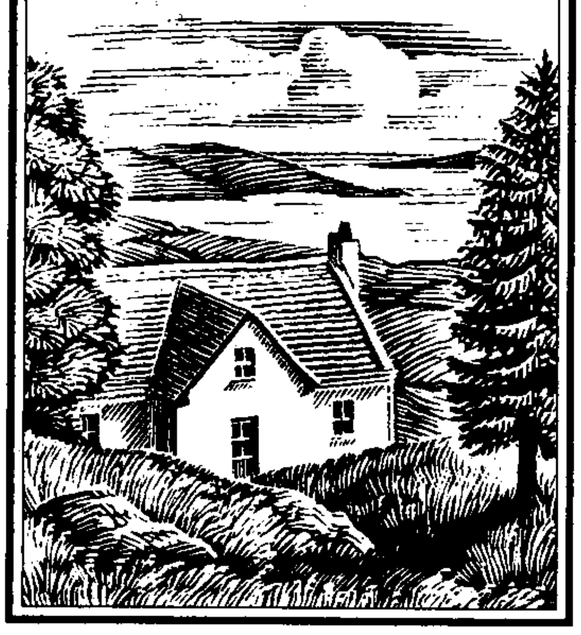

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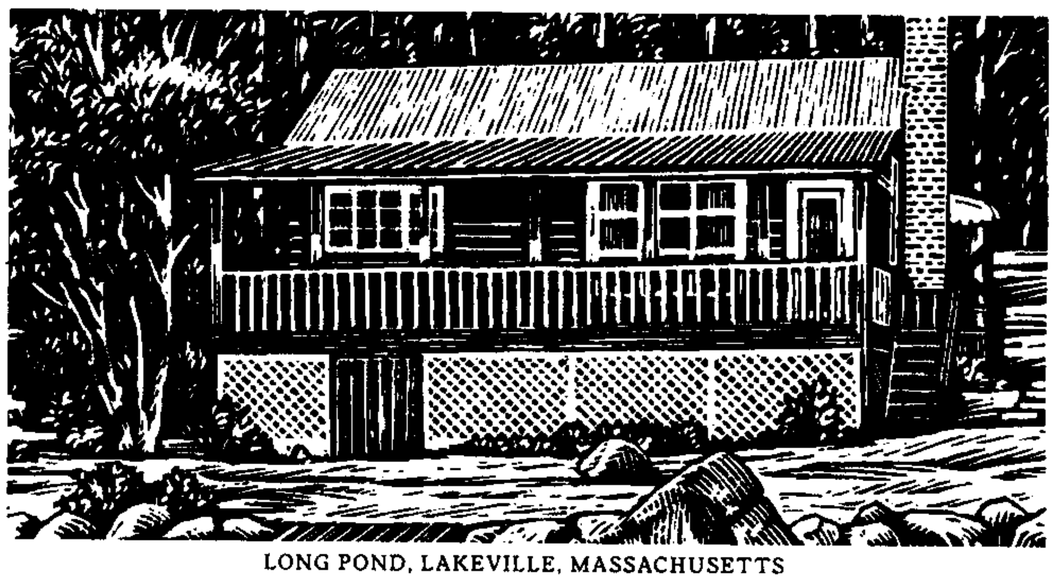

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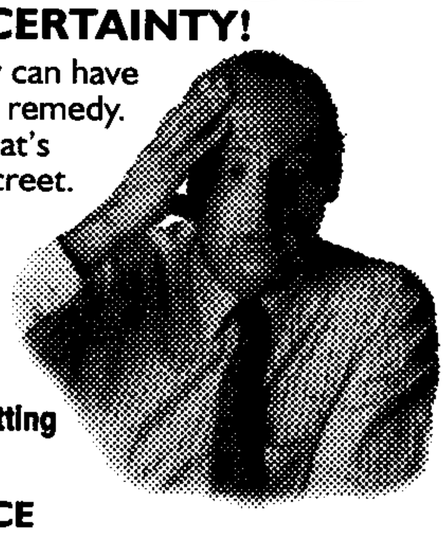

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But it is on the matter of quality that I am expecting Mr MacFilthy to make a difference. He is after all widely accepted as a journalistic genius and he is the editor behind such great headlines in his previous papers as "Look at Sharon's Tits!", "Look at Janice's Bum!" and the all-time classic "Look at Karen's Tits and Bum!".

It is true that the Moron newspapers have become very bad indeed. But only Mr MacFilthy can *really* take my red-top stable of tabloids to the heady depths of the bottom of the gutter where they might make me some money again.

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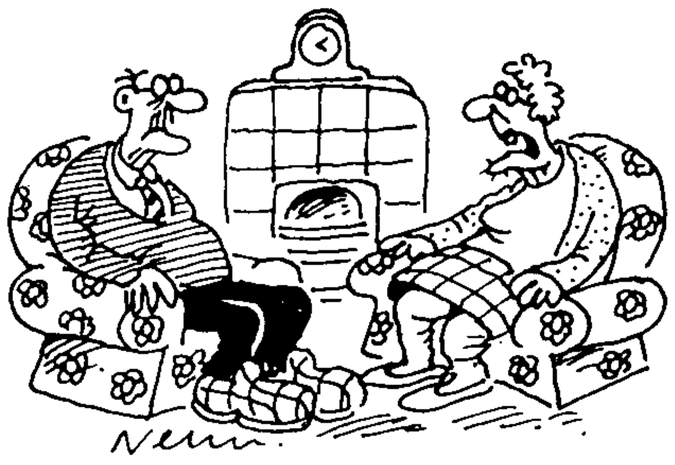

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COLOUR SECTION

GORDON hates Robin, John, Derry and Peter. He also doesn't like Mo and he wants Tony's job.

Robin hates Gordon and John hates Gordon too. Gordon likes Margaret, but John does not. Robin and John hate Harriet because she can't count up, but Gordon likes Harriet because she can't count up. Gordon is the only person who likes Harriet.

Robin really wants Gordon's job, but Gordon will not let him have it. Alistair pretends to like Gordon *and* Tony, although no one likes Alistair, especially since he shaved his beard off. Gordon, Robin, Jack and John hate Derry and Derry hates them. Gordon, Robin, John, Jack, David, Chris and Clare hate Peter. Peter hates everyone apart from Tony, Derry and Rupert who delivers the newspapers. Tony likes Maggie, but not Margaret, and would really like to dump Gordon, Robin, Margaret, Chris and Clare. Nobody really likes Tony apart from Peter and Derry, but that does not matter much because Tony has his eye on Brenda's job.

● *More HP Sauce page 8*

"WE PUBLISH the transcripts of Dawn Alford's undercover tape recording today," the *Mirror* announced last week, "to contradict a growing whispering campaign amongst the chattering classes that he [William Straw] was an unwilling victim in our investigation. They establish beyond doubt that he sold the drugs to our reporter voluntarily."

Actually, no one had ever claimed that young Straw was forced to supply drugs to Alford against his will. What the *Eye* did suggest was that William obtained the dope, after prompting from Alford, as a small favour for an attractive young woman who had been buying him lager.

Straw's conversation with *Mirror* hackettes Dawn Alford and Tanith Carey lasted for four hours, all of which was recorded. But in spite of the *Mirror*'s boast of "publishing the transcripts", the only exchange it printed runs to little more than a minute — and even this confirms the *Eye*'s account. Straw volunteered to get some dope only *after* Alford had turned to her colleague and asked "Tanith, have you got any puff?" Being a bright boy, he took the hint.

According to the *Mirror*, William Straw's behaviour proves that he is "an experienced drug dealer". Lest we forget, Straw bought a £10 lump of cannabis from a friend, for which he was then reimbursed by Dawn Alford. He made no profit whatsoever on the transaction. Is this really how "experienced drug dealers" operate?

What most annoys Alford is the suggestion that "I used my sex and my cleavage to get a good story". As she says, "you don't last long in this business simply by fluttering your eyelashes at people". She and Carey were "dressed casually". How odd, then, that the final instruction given to Alford and Carey by the *Mirror* news desk before they departed on their assignment was — "dress tarty".

● *More Street of Shame page 6*

THE Dame Shirley Porter scandal may run and run in Westminster, where residents are upset at losing out on the possibility of a year of zero rates.

If Porter pays back the £27m the courts say she owes ratepayers, the council need only raise £4m of next year's £31m. But she is not going to pay it back, and has shifted all her assets abroad where they are safe from the council's lawyers. The question the ratepayers are now asking their council is: why didn't you take steps to keep Porter's money in Britain?

Ever since 1975 the courts have recognised something called a "Mareva injunction": an order preventing a party to a legal action from switching funds out of the country to avoid paying up if they lose. The circumstances of the Porter case seem highly conducive to a Mareva injunction, which could have been applied for and issued as soon as the case was sent to the district auditor, and might have prevented the dame from sending her assets to Bermuda, the Bahamas or Israel.

Why did Westminster council not apply for a Mareva? Its answer, which it says stems from legal advice from City lawyers Stephenson Harwood, is that it was "not appropriate" to do so. This conclusion, and the advice which led up to it, seem almost certain to be referred to the district auditor, and another lot of councillors and officials — even the district auditor himself — could be surcharged for not ensuring that her money was kept in the country so the council could be repaid.

Hilary Armstrong, "new" Labour's local government minister, doesn't seem too worried. She expresses the "hope" that Lady Porter will have "the moral decency" to pay up. Is this a sign that Labour is showing compassion to people who owe the council money? If so, there has been a marked shift in policy since November 1993 when a penniless Martin Jacques was jailed for not paying £200.62 arrears in poll tax. The name of the presecution barrister: Cherie Blair QC.

● *More Rotten Boroughs page 13*

THE Church of England has picked the new chairman of its pensions board carefully so as to avoid any of the unpleasantness that dogged it in the past over its unhappy property speculations.

He is Allan Bridgewater, recently awarded the CBE for services to the insurance industry. (See the last *Eye* for Mr Bridgewater's record as chief executive of the Norwich Union during the great pensions swindle, his sacking of the entire sales staff and his firm's being fined £300,000 by the regulators).

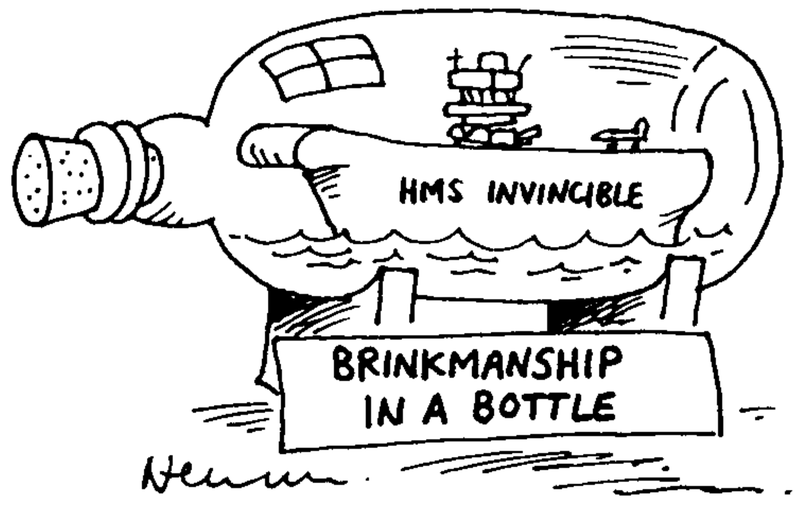
● *More Footnotes page 30*

LIVE TV's head Kelvin MacKenzie was delighted to reveal details of his station's £1.5m TV movie *The People's Princess* about Diana's romance with Dodi Fayed.

Questioned on the tactlessness of his cable station cashing in so soon after Diana's death, Kelvin pointed out: "It ends before the crash you know. Showing the crash — that would have been tasteless."

● *More Media page 10*

● *PLUS: She was Big in the '80s – she's enormous in the '90s 28*
● *PLUS: Four-Page Tribute to John Wells . . 21*



Street of Shame

THE promotion of Kelvin Mackenzie as deputy chief executive of Mirror Group is the first sign of the long-expected demise of David "Rommel" Montgomery as the *Mirror*'s editorial supremo.

Terrified by the collapse in the circulation of all the group newspapers, and by the *Daily Mirror*'s imminent eclipse as No 2 in the daily circulation lists (with catastrophic consequences for the group's advertising revenue), the motley band of institutions which own Mirror Group have acted at last.

They insisted on "new faces" in the *Mirror*'s editorial team, so step forward "Maggie's Kelvin", the former editor of the *Sun* and patron at Murdoch's Wapping of well-known new faces like, well, David Montgomery and Piers Morgan, the latter now editor of the *Mirror*.

Another reason for the changes is the pending departure of Robert Maxwell's men: Charlie "Gorbals" Wilson, who is stepping down as managing director; and chairman Sir Robert Clark, the merchant banker who served Maxwell faithfully ever since the old days of the Pergamon/Leasco scandal in the late 1960s.

Clark became chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers in 1991 when it was so glamorously floated by the fat man. The flotation, and the mysterious vanishing of £100m profit in the seven months before Maxwell was found floating on the high seas, was the subject of an investigation by department of trade inspectors, whose report has until now been mysteriously suppressed (*Eyes passim*).

The *Mail on Sunday* reports (18 Jan) that Margaret Beckett, president of the board of trade, "is deciding when to publish" the DTI report, in spite of likely embarrassment to her colleagues, former Maxwell acolytes Helen Liddell, economic secretary to the treasury (*see HP Sauce*), and Lord Donoughue, agriculture minister. The report is likely to criticise the directors who sat on Maxwell's board taking their salaries while Maxwell stole the £100m profits. The two most prominent of these directors are Robert Clark and Charlie Wilson, who combined to put Montgomery in charge in 1992 and have now so suddenly decided to gather up their share options and depart the scene.

The Mirror Group is head-hunting a new chairman. In the spirit of reconciliation and old friendships now prevailing, what about Kevin or Ian Maxwell? They have plenty of experience and have never done anything wrong.

BRIDGET "Death" Rowe, looking doomed as editor of the *Sunday Mirror*, previously sacked anyone she thought a potential rival. But she surpassed herself in axing the person who had helped her own career — our old friend Lady Eve Pollard.

La Bollard, whose own career has seen better days (ie editing the *Sunday Express* and the *Sunday Mirror*), was rescued when "Death" appointed her, for a large fee, as the *Sunday Mirror* agony aunt. It was not a great success and "Death" lived up to her name by killing off the pisspoor column in a new year fax to Eve at her South of France home.

THE many *Sunday Express* hacks sacked by former editor Sue Douglas were surprised to see a piece in the *Times* two weeks ago by one Grace Bradbery. A "friend of Sue Douglas" was quoted protesting loudly about the manner of her removal from the *Express* group after working "so hard" for all of eight months.

So what did the *Times* use to illustrate its tear-jerking outpourings about the hard-done-by editrix? An old picture of la Douglas taken outside Croydon industrial tribunal — where she was savaged by the chairman for sacking people "with complete disregard for the law or good employment practice".

MARIE Claire kicks off its February issue with a guide to its features team which is trying to overcome "logistical problems".

The guide is accompanied by a photo of three of the team, including the curly-haired, beaming Helen Johnston. Pages later, however, a feature called "Fighting Talk" about three couples and their domestic rows is accompanied by a photo of one "Catherine Hannam, 24", who is described as "a student".

Oddly, a photo reveals Hannam as curly-haired and beaming — and a dead ringer for features team member Helen Johnston. Logistical problems, anyone?

CATHOLIC *Herald* editor Deborah Jones is determined to hold on to her job — and she knows just how to go about it.

In an editorial two weeks ago she expressed amazement at the award of a papal knighthood to Rupert Murdoch, as had many other Catholics. But she went a step further, proposing that press baron Conrad Black has "a higher claim to a Catholic honour".

An inspired choice — especially since Black also happens to be a director of the *Catholic Herald*.

MORALE at the sinking *Sun* has taken a Titanic-like plunge with news that Ian Monk, disgraced deputy editor of the *Express*, is joining as features supremo.

Monk parted company with the *Express* last year after it was alleged that he tried to sell an advance copy of Allan Starkie's biography of the Duchess Fergiana ("acquired" by his wife) for around £30,000... to the *Sun*. The *Express* threatened prosecution but backed down — possibly because it feared he might reveal where various embarrassing bodies were buried in the Grey Lubyanka.

Sun hacks are bewildered by his new appointment, especially since editor Stuart Higgins has blamed the paper's sliding circulation on the post-Diana disappearance of women readers. Higgins has told staff that a less laddish, more female-friendly approach is in order for 1998 — which is presumably why, following Monk's arrival, the top four executives are now all men.

PS: In the last year Monk's journalistic services have not been hugely in demand. Most recently he was working for showbiz PR outfit MacLaurin Communications — whose best-known client is Mr Blobby.

ON 8 January the *Daily Mail* brandished an inconclusive Home Office survey on the relationship between violent films and vicious crime, demanding that Jack Straw must order more draconian censorship. The *Mail*'s TV pundit Jaci Stephen joined the chorus, wondering why producers prefer physical or emotional conflict to nice, clean stories about love and tolerance. "The reasoning is that the viewers like it that way, yet the success of films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* shows otherwise..."

A number of *Eye* readers have contrasted this with an article published on 31 July 1995 by the *Guardian*, in which a female TV critic attacked the "hysterical and one-dimensional" attitude of *Daily Mail* pundits to screen violence and bad language. "Together this select group of Britain's bigots-in-chief have united in the view that the supposed lack of taste and decency on our screens is destroying the moral fabric of the nation," she sneered.

The author of this anti-*Mail* diatribe? Er, Jaci Stephen.

WHEN *Torygraph* home affairs editor Sue Ryan was asked to put forward suggestions for the *Press Gazette*'s journalism awards, she chose Tom Utley. Her preference bemused the newsroom hacks who like Utley but feel his strongest claim to fame is the extraordinary length of his lunches, not his writing prowess.

Utley does have something else in his favour though: he is the son of the late T.E. Utley, esteemed mentor of Charles Moore at the *Torygraph* and inspiration for the T.E. Utley Memorial Awards for, er, promising young journalists.

Ryan's support for young Utley was evidently seen as sound judgement by editor Moore: she has been elevated to be managing editor.

THE *Torygraph*'s latest desperate attempt to appear young at heart appeared in Boris Johnson's opinion piece on 14 January.

"As one Labour source put it yesterday, 'Blair is the President and Brown is the Prime Minister'; or to take a showbiz metaphor, does anyone remember a pop group called Wham!? There was Andrew Ridgeley and George Michael. You must remember 'Wham! Bam! I am a Man' was one of their songs'."

HACKS at the *People*, reeling under deranged new editor Brendon "Chucky" Parsons, have been cheered by news that Chucky's long-suffering wife Alison is writing a steamy "sex romps" novel.

Apparently it contains unbridled scenes of "steamy and exotic" sex in... Brighton, their home town. Hacks are hoping it will contain, from her hubby's pillow talk, scenes of *Mirror* politics. There are even suggestions that this literary sensation might be something of *roman-à-Chucky*!

THE Prince of Wales and the royal rat pack have been locked in a hellish marriage of convenience since Diana's death. But how long can the shotgun honeymoon last?

Brian's new spin-doctor Mark Bolland is even known inside Buckingham Palace as "Mark Bollocks". This is due to the disdain traditional courtiers feel for his mateyness with the press "reptiles" to whom he feeds his "bollocks".

But the fawning drivel the "royal experts" write masks the fact that in reality the rat pack is furious with him. He is trying to offlay the expense of his official visit to Sri Lanka and Nepal next month by charging them a fortune to accompany him on the royal flight from RAF Northolt.

"The whole trip will cost over £3,000," wails one ungrateful scribbler to the *Eye*. "He had loads of coverage in South Africa because he took Harry and met the Spice Girls. Otherwise he's just a plonker in a business suit."

"He's refusing to accept his redundancy!"

HERITAGE NEWS

LAST week *Private Eye* faxed both Earl Spencer and Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of English Heritage, about a well-sourced story that Spencer had been discussing with Stevens the possibility of English Heritage taking over the running of Althorp, his loss-making Northamptonshire pile, but had pulled out of talks as soon as Diana died.

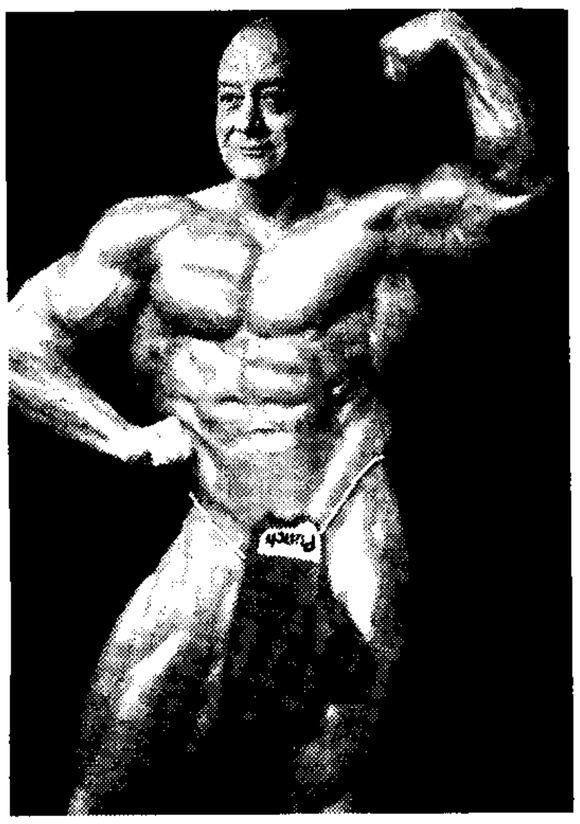
Althorp, which once ran at a loss of £450,000 a year, looks set to make serious sums now it is to be turned into a commercial shrine to the late princess. With adults being charged £9.50 for entry, profits could reach £1,444,000 a year.

Curiously, however, the denials from the earl and the knight were contradictory.

First came a curt fax from the English Heritage chairman: "Not only have I not been in discussion with Earl Spencer about the possibility of English Heritage taking over the running of Althorp, I have never met the man."

Then came a reply from Spencer, via his PR person Shelley-Anne Claircourt: "The Earl says that they have spoken, but not on that issue. They have had personal conversations on other subjects."

O·B·N



AS everyone now knows, Mohamed Fayed has a very small organ. It is called *Punch*.

As everyone also knows, Fayed is none too well-endowed in the penile department. But the shameless brown-nosers at his "humorous magazine" are trying to improve the tubby tycoon's image by publishing a computer-enhanced photo in their subscription ads. This shows him with a rippling, Schwarzenegger torso and — apparently — such an enormous donger that it needs a specially elongated boxing glove to cover it.

Alas, few of Fayed's sexually-harassed employees share *Punch*'s opinion of his attractiveness. The latest victim is 17-year-old Harrods assistant Samantha-Jane Ramsay, who was spotted by Fayed on the in-store video and summoned to his office. "He stood close to me and cupped my face," she tells the *News of the World*. "I panicked. I thought he was going to snog me. He saw my look and kissed me on the cheek. He said, 'Don't worry, everything will be OK.' But I was terrified. As I was about to turn and leave he groped me. He put his right arm out and touched my bottom and thigh, rubbing his hands up and down me. My eyes welled up. I was speechless. Then he handed me four new £50 notes."

When the teenager complained to her supervisor, she was promptly fired.

LEGAL NEWS

PERHAPS the most outstanding example of the brilliance of lawyer Anthony Julius was his consummate handling of Princess Diana's case against one Bryce Taylor.

Taylor ran the London gym where exciting photos were secretly taken of Diana in her gym kit and sold to the *Daily Mirror*. Furious, the princess consulted her lawyers, Farrers, who advised her there was no cause of action against Taylor. The princess refused to accept this advice and consulted Lord Mishcon, of Mishcon de Reya. He advised her she had a cast-iron case. Not only would she win it, but the case would establish a privacy law for all time. He had just the man to take the case on: his scintillatingly brilliant partner, Anthony Julius.

The wretched Taylor, who had fled to Australia, was so terrified by Mishcon de Reya's writ he begged to be allowed out of the action if only he could keep £2,000 of the proceeds of the sale of the pictures. This offer was contemptuously rejected by Mishcon de Reya, which insisted on proceeding to trial. Taylor promptly got legal aid and a QC, the lefty Geoffrey Robertson, who prepared to cross-examine the princess on her submission that a contract with the gym-owner had been made by her personal policeman, not to mention on her own close relationship with gossip writers.

Shortly before the case came to court, an unofficial whip-round was organised among "top people" to persuade Bryce Taylor to drop the case. When he heard he could make £500,000 and another £200,000 to pay the tax on it, he eagerly withdrew. A case which should never have been started and could have been settled for a pittance ended up by losing the friends of the Princess of Wales at least three quarters of a million pounds.

HACKWATCH

MIXED DOUBLES

THERE have been many great double-acts in the 20th century — Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise, Lilley and Portillo. But none can match the blossoming partnership between two of the *Spectator*'s barmiest columnists, Paul Johnson and Taki. Though Johnson is a stern Catholic moralist and Taki is a drunken womaniser, they are fast becoming two minds with but a single thought...

21 June: Taki attacks the British journalists who have dared to criticise his chum Jimmy Goldsmith. Hacks, he explains, are "jealous, ugly, freeloading" characters who live with "grotty little wives in their grotty little houses".

28 June: Paul Johnson attacks the British journalists who have dared to criticise his chum Jonathan Aitken. Hacks, he explains, "tend to be ugly, stunted — or, if tall, uncouth — poor, because they spend their money on drink or in the betting shop, with bedraggled wives and unwelcoming homes".

12 July: Johnson rushes to the defence of Taki, who has been denounced by Mayor Giuliani of New York merely for saying that all the city's Puerto Ricans were worthless layabouts. "Taki, in his inimitable way, was making a serious point," he believes. "So, hands off him, Mr Mayor."

19 July: "Walking six hours a day with the great Paul Johnson and the articulate Lady Powell can be a humbling experience," Taki reports breathlessly from Gstaad. "After a quick breakfast, we set off. Six hours later we were back, blisters and all, but sated, the way one is after, well, love-making." What on earth have they been up to in the mountains?

26 July: "Last week I walked with friends in the Swiss alps," Johnson reveals, for the benefit of anyone who missed Taki's despatch. While there, his thoughts naturally turned to the "appalling" behaviour of the *Guardian*'s editor Alan Rusbridger in exposing Jonathan Aitken and Neil Hamilton. Over in the High Life column, Little Miss Echo takes up the theme. "The weather having suddenly turned perfect, I am inspired to add my two cents (as they say in Brooklyn) to Paul Johnson's recent jeremiad concerning unbridled press power." Since "Johnson the sage" is already taking care of *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger, "I won't concentrate my guns on a man who is to editing what rap is to classical music". Instead Taki fills the rest of his page with a rant against... the *Guardian*.

6 September: Princess Diana was killed by the media, Johnson argues. "Over many years I have written more articles advocating a privacy law than on any other subject... Nothing short of the fear of a prison cell will deter certain editors and proprietors."

13 September: Princess Diana was killed by the media, Taki argues. "Paul Johnson has been asking for a law to curb the sleazeballs for a long time," he notes admiringly.

20 September: Paul Johnson issues a warning to Tony Blair: "The undermining of the institution of marriage and the weakening of the family system stand right at the heart of Britain's problems."

27 September: As a promiscuous philanderer, Taki surely can't join his friend's crusade for family values? Yes he can. "It seems almost obscene to be back in London, a grimy, big city and, in the words of the great Paul Johnson, 'perverted, brutal, degenerate, horribly modish'," he grumbles. But a brilliantly original thought occurs to him: Tony Blair should "champion the call for renewing Britain's cultural values, starting with family values".

18 October: "I have been thinking about sculpture," Johnson writes, "because Taki has given me, to keep in my London garden, a superb copy of Auguste Rodin's male nude, 'The Age of Brass'." Oddly enough, Taki has been ruminating on cultural matters as well. "Once upon a time, during the early Fifties, New York was a hell of a town," he reminisces. "Conservative white ethnics ruled the roost..." But then uppity blacks started playing their ghastly jungle music. How dare they! "We are," Taki reminds them, "predominantly a white society rooted in Christianity, Ancient Greece and Rome."

25 October: Lagging behind his disciple for once, Johnson boasts of the intellectual superiority of "those of us brought up in the Western cultural-religious tradition, springing from classical Greece and Rome and the Hebrew Bible".

1 November: Taki's friend William F. Buckley has published a spiritual autobiography. "For one brief, shining moment I thought that God and Christianity were making a comeback," the devout playboy comments. "Paul Johnson started it with his personal pilgrimage, *A Quest For God...*"

15 November: "My wife Marigold says, 'Do you have to go on about that nice Mr Rusbridger?' The answer is: yes — duty calls." And so Johnson launches yet another attack on the *Guardian* editor, dismissing him as "a jumped-up gossip columnist".

22 November: By way of variety, Taki attacks "the jumped-up gossip columnist Alan Rusbridger".

6 December: Taki has decided to improve his mind. "I am," he reveals, "in the middle of reading Paul Johnson's unputdownable *A History of the American People*."

13 December: Perhaps inspired by Taki's plug, Johnson inserts one of his own. He recently agreed to appear on a late-night TV show, he boasts, "to tell insomniacs about my *A History of the American People*."

20/27 December: "It's been a bummer of a year," Taki muses. "Paul Johnson caught the spirit of the times a couple of weeks ago. 'Is there any form of human life quite so low as a journalist?' he asked."

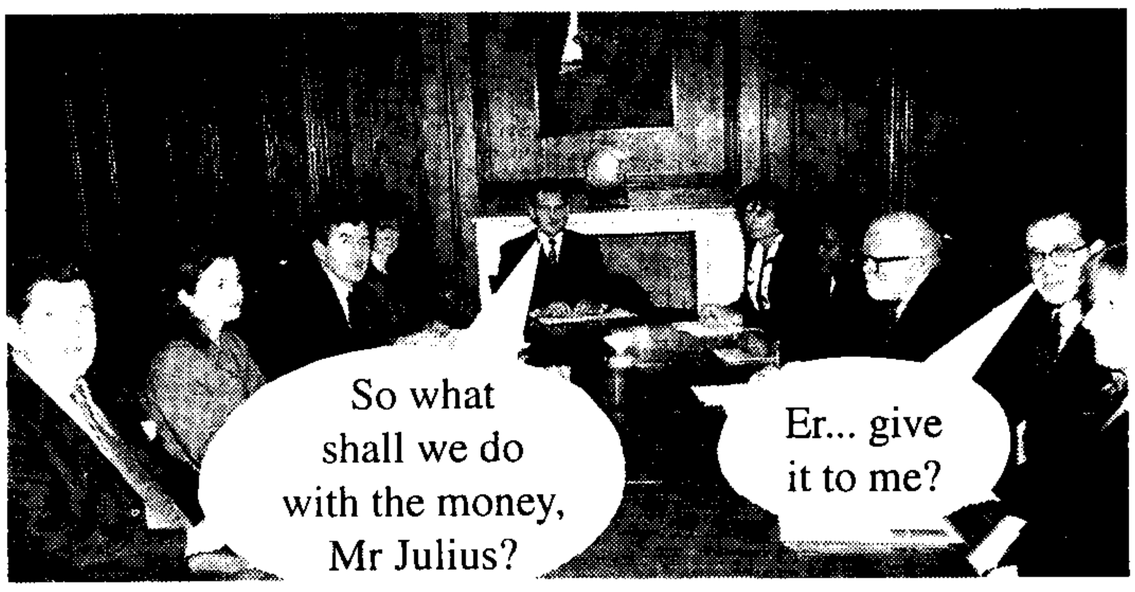
3 January: Looking back over the year, Johnson is pleased to announce that "I have made some splendid new friends". Could one of them be Greek, by any chance?

10 January: Taki attacks "the scum of *Private Eye*" for peddling gossip. "Gossip journalism is, as someone recently wrote, 'being lied about by people who, themselves corrupt, are unable to recognise honesty in others'." The someone in question was — surprise! — Paul Johnson. Meanwhile, Johnson himself is raging against the award of a Companionate of Honour to "Eric Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian", a man who "legitimises Stalin".

17 January: Original as ever, Taki is incensed by "the Marxist swine and Stalin apologist Eric Hobsbawm becoming a Companion of Honour". Even more originally, Paul Johnson rants against the *Guardian*, which has had the temerity to accuse Taki of racism merely because he called a black man Sambo. According to Johnson, the real racists are employed by the *Guardian*. "One of its victims is Taki himself, constantly subjected to racial insults as 'a Greek-Cypriot waiter'. Only this week the paper dredged up various obsolete terms of abuse, 'kike', 'Yid' and 'nigger', to make a humbugging point. Outside the *Guardian* you would never come across such terms in print these days."

Oh no? Perhaps he missed this sentence from Taki's white-supremacist column of 18 October: "However depressing it may sound, multi-culturalism is the 'nigger in the woodpile', pun intended." One can only hope this isn't drawn to the attention of Paul "anti-racist" Johnson. It could be the end of a beautiful multi-ethnic friendship.

DIANA MEMORIAL FUND COMMITTEE MEETS



IN THE TEAROOM

SO, who's up and who's down after all this brouhaha over Paul Routledge's biography of Gordon Brown? Smiles all round among staff at Number 10: they've finally been given a proper job.

Since the election the PM's private office and policy unit have been almost entirely occupied with presentational gimmickry, while Gordon's lads at the treasury, Ed Balls and Charlie Whelan, have been revolutionising economic policy, planning the restructuring of the welfare state, making a start on the eradication of unemployment — in fact, running the country. By contrast, the Number 10 crew have been confined to candyfloss projects like Cool Britannia and the Japanese apology, and floating daft wheezes like the one about allowing business spivs to run our schools.

This has been very frustrating for pointyheads Dave Miliband and Geoff Mulgan, who had thought they'd be the ones steering the ship of state. Now huge chunks of the social agenda are to be wrested from the dirty-kneed scruffs at Number 11 and restored to the mummy's boys in the policy playpen nextdoor. And so in comes civil servant Jeremy Heywood as Blair's personal economic adviser to help second-guess the brooding, possibly malevolent chancellor.

But it's not all technocratic managerialism: there are old fashioned political repercussions too. The super-talented Alastair Darling, rising star of the administration, may have to loiter a while longer at his present position in the firmament because he's seen as too much a pal of Gordon. Harriet Harman has had her wrist slapped for alarming the middle-classes with WhelanBalls talk of "affluence tests". Brownite chief whip Nick Brown, trade minister Nigel Griffiths, even FO minister Doug Henderson now have the black spot. And there'll be no liferaft launched to help the flailing Geoffrey Robinson. If Brown can save him, let him; but Messrs Campbell and Mandelson won't help.

Blair has finally realised how few members of the cabinet really love him. Come the reshuffle he'll want to promote a few stooges — Stephen Byers, Alan Milburn and, let's not forget, P. Mandelson. In the long term, though, Brown may profit from the affair. The message he has sent out is like the low-frequency booming of a great whale — it will be heard many miles away in the trade unions and in the constituency parties, and the echoes picked up by the Number 10 sonar speak of more trouble to come.

'Urquhart'

PAUL Routledge is suing his publisher for premature disclosure of his authorised biography of Gordon Brown, which details the spat between the chancellor and Tony Blair.

Routledge is livid about loss of serialisation income after a rogue copy of the book was bought by Labour MP George Galloway at Glasgow airport before it was hurriedly withdrawn, and details then found their way on to the *Guardian* front page.

Routledge was so furious he refused to appear with Galloway — an old chum of Brown's — to debate the book's contents on *Midnight Hour*. Things can only get even more bitter...

IT IS distressing to learn that treasury minister Helen Liddell MP is still suffering from the severe amnesia that has afflicted her since the death of her former employer, Robert Maxwell.

Without a trace of irony Liddell has now reinvented herself as the "scourge of the pensions industry" — and in a *Sunday Telegraph* interview two weeks ago took the opportunity to answer the "slurs" about her association with the fat man.

It was in 1988, she says, that "to her surprise Maxwell rang and offered her a seat on the board of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*." This is a lie. The offer did not come out of the blue, as she suggests, since on 26 October 1987 Liddell sent a letter to Maxwell asking for a job — writing that "I hope you do not find this approach impertinent". Perhaps Liddell assumes that the letter has long since been destroyed. If so, she may be in for a shock.

In the *Telegraph* interview, Liddell repeats her threadbare alibi that she had few if any dealings with the fat man while she presided over his Scottish newspapers as director of corporate affairs. "I was 450 miles away from him and because the newspapers were enormously profitable he took less of an interest in them."

This is a slight improvement on some of her earlier stories: in 1994 she told an interviewer that "I have never worked for Robert Maxwell. It is a smear to suggest I was ever employed by him." But it is still far from the whole truth.

In fact, as the *Eye* reported at the time, she was renowned and feared for her ruthless devotion to Cap'n Bob. Escorting him to a function in Edinburgh City Chambers in 1988, where he was presenting awards to those involved in the Commonwealth Games, she clung to him so closely that at one point she even followed him into the gents' lavatory — a historic moment that was recorded by a BBC TV documentary crew filming the event. In the following two years she often accompanied Maxwell in his private plane on trips abroad, including a sortie to Bulgaria to advise the new government on how to run its elections. And in 1991 she was involved in the notorious Mirror Group flotation, which was the subject of a DTI inquiry.

JON TRICKETT, Labour MP for the Yorkshire mining constituency of Hemsworth and parliamentary private secretary to Peter Mandelson, has at last moved in defence of the coal industry.

In *Eye* 939 we reported how his constituents feared he was keeping an unusually low profile compared to other coalfield MPs who had been openly lobbying the government to save the industry. At the same time, his boss Mandy had been seen whispering into the ear of hapless energy minister John Battle.

Stung into action, Trickett — with Mandy in tow — attended a photo op at Kellingley colliery earlier this month at which Mandy, wearing a miner's helmet and with coaldust suitably smeared on his face, promised miners: "The industry has a future". Has the minister without portfolio told the energy minister yet?

But Hemsworth constituents aren't the only ones asking if they have been getting value for money from Mandy's PPS. Council taxpayers in Leeds, where Trickett was council leader from 1989 to 1996, are still counting the cost of his tenure.

According to figures just released, £40,000 worth of improvements were made to the council leader's office during his reign. During his last two years as leader, Trickett made 15 overseas trips on council business — to Amsterdam, Bilbao, Brussels, Lille, Malaga, Nice, Paris and Vienna — costing more than £20,000. All were essential for the leader of a Yorkshire council to make.

ROBIN "Ready Steady" Cook says he will marry Gaynor Regan just as soon as he can get unhitched from his last wife. Why, some may wonder, isn't he divorced already?

When his adultery was exposed, the Cooks agreed to have a quickie divorce. He told Margaret she could keep their house in Scotland.

Now, however, Robin finds himself strapped for cash and has asked his jilted spouse if he can have a share of the spoils after all — not least because he wants to put down a deposit on a new home for himself and la Regan.

HEALTH workers reassured by health secretary Frank Dobson's avuncular presence may be rather less impressed by his new "special adviser", one Simon "Slasher" Stevens.

Educated at Balliol, where he was an ally of Stephen Twigg, who took Michael Portillo's Enfield Southgate seat for Labour, Stevens later joined the Twigglet as a keen member of Islington Labour party. After training to become an NHS manager, he surfaced in his mid-twenties (1992) as a senior manager at St Thomas's, where he earned more than £50,000 a year — and much notoriety — for closing wards, laying off staff and helping merge the hospital with Guy's.

In those days it was Stevens' proud boast that he would walk into the wards each day and ask: "Are there any nurses here that I can fire?" Now that he has the whole NHS as his adventure playground, is anyone safe?

BOOTED out of the European parliamentary Labour party, rebel MEP Ken Coates was summoned before the executive of his North Nottingham and Chesterfield constituency to answer charges — only to be prevented from answering any charges when the door was slammed shut in his face.

Despite appeals from a few brave souls that Coates be permitted to put his case, a hatchet faced party official told the gathering that Coates was "no longer a member of the Labour party". As the meeting grew more heated, the demand went up that the windows be opened. But as the sash was lifted, the former Spartite MP Reg Race (*Eyes passim*), who dementedly harbours hopes for the seat, shouted with the by now freezing Coates in mind, "No, don't do that. He might hear us."

THOSE attending a recent symposium on "new" Labour organised by the *London Review of Books* and the *New Left Review* were staggered to hear a thunderous attack on Tony Blair for "his similarity to Margaret Thatcher" by a grey haired grandee who then went on to pronounce himself "the most leftwing member of the audience". For it was none other than that delightful old toff, Ian Gilmour.

NOW that the confusion as to whether Robin Cook or Donald Dewar should be Scotland's first minister has been resolved by Tony Blair in Dewar's favour, that is it. Or is it?

Sadly, no one has apparently had the courage to gently remind the prime minister that this small matter is actually in the hands of the Scots electorate. And if a recent poll of voting intentions for the new parliament in *The Herald* (Labour 27 percent, SNP 34 percent) is anything to go by, it may not be Donald at all. Step forward first minister... Alex Salmond.

WHO said Harriet Harman has no soul? The social security secretary took time out from welfare reform recently to advise a sister in need.

The plea for help came from ex-Trotskeyite septuagenarian Mildred Gordon, the former MP for Bow and Poplar who was recently widowed. Now that she is out of parliament, she wrote to Harman saying she has time on her hands and a lot still to offer — could the party or Harriet help find her "something to do"?

Perhaps Mildred saw herself in the Lords or on a health board or sitting on an industrial tribunal. But Harriet didn't. She replied that she was sorry Mildred was at a loose end and told the former firebrand that, er, "many of my older friends have taken up bridge". Never were there such devoted sisters...

TAXPAYERS in a panic about new self-assessment forms have received little help from the taxman. A deluge of inquiries caused the tax computer to crash only two weeks before the self-assessment deadline.

Spokesmen wrote this off as an expected teething problem. And who supplies the taxmen's temperamental computer system? Step forward old *Eye* favourite EDS, which supplies the systems in a contract worth £1.6bn over 10 years. (EDS scored previous successes at the disastrous Child Support Agency and the Student Loans Company.)

SO much for Labour's "ethical" foreign policy: it has done nothing to alter Britain's relations with the torturers of Bahrain.

There was no official complaint last October when *Eye* 935 revealed that Dennis Turner, MP for Wolverhampton South East and parliamentary private secretary to Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, had been on a five-day freebie — sorry: "study tour" — to the kingdom at the expense of the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies.

As *Eye* readers know, the GCSS is run by Omar Al Hassan, who in 1994 paid the then Tory MP for Corby, William Powell, regular monthly £500 cheques which the MP did not declare. Dennis Turner *does* declare his October freebie in the new register. He also discloses that his wife, who went with him, was showered with "gifts of jewellery" from the emir. The standard emir's gift for MPs is a £15,000 Rolex watch, but his emirness is traditionally much more generous to women.

Ken Purchase, MP for Wolverhampton North East and PPS to overseas development secretary Clare Short, also tagged along. He also took his wife and she also got "gifts of jewellery" from the emir. David Wilshire, MP for Spelthorne, went on the freebie as well and his wife got jewellery too. But then he is a Tory.

Given the gifts of jewellery it seems churlish to mention that the Bahrain government's cavalier approach to human rights was on display again on 9 January when five boys, two aged 15, two aged 14 and one of them just 10 years old, were arrested by the emir's police and carted off to the torture chambers on the island of Nabih Salah. At least 20 other suspected dissidents are held incommunicado there under the control of the island's British-born and British-trained intelligence chief, Ian Henderson.

At the same time, the British foreign office has received a strong demand from Bahrain's foreign minister Sheikh Mohammad Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, a cousin of the emir, that Bahraini dissidents here should be extradited to Bahrain so they too can be tortured properly. At least the foreign office is inclined to reject the demand — but it will be rejected politely.

OVERHEARD in the Commons library last week was the lugubrious law officer Geoff Hoon MP.

Gingerly approaching the loans desk and clearing his throat, he finally piped up with the air of someone asking the barber for "something for the weekend".

"Er, is there a very long queue for the Gordon Brown book?"

'Backbiter'

WATER NEWS

WHEN Frank Dobson was shadow environment secretary he criticised the government several times for allowing the privatised water companies to disconnect domestic users for non-payment.

Now in the ninth month of a Labour government, the National Campaign for Water Justice reports two disconnections within the last two weeks. A family of five in Brigg, near Scunthorpe, had its water turned off for eight days by Anglia Water. And a single mother with two children from Ashby de la Zouche had her supply cut off for four days by Severn Trent. Neither supply was reconnected on government order: only because the campaign group threatened media exposure of the utilities' new year gifts.

● Meanwhile water campaigners who gave the London *Evening Standard* four stories about Thames Water's misdemeanours were surprised when they were not published.

In one case, Thames Water trucks were used to help in the construction of Tramlink 2000, a transport project by Morrisons, a company owned by Thames Water. Even though the water company had diverted resources from its water consumers' utility to a "non-core business", nary a word appeared in the *Standard*.

Then, on 5 January, a piece about Thames finally materialised — a large puff congratulating the company on its leak detection units and praising it for the money it puts into this venture.

PS: Thames Water pays the *Standard* handsomely for daily use of two advertising spaces on the paper's expensive page two and the front of its pink business section.

NOOKS and CORNERS

"DELIGHTED with the beauty of our new villa," wrote William Wilberforce MP in 1803 when staying at Batheaston outside Bath. "This is a beautiful country." Earlier, in 1766, Horace Walpole had been there and described the River Avon "falling in a wide cascade, a church behind it in a vale, into which two mountains descend, leaving an opening in the distant country." Those arriving in Bath today along the old London Road can still enjoy this view across Bathampton Meadow down the Claverton Valley. But for how much longer?

The local district plan tried to protect the meadow by giving it green belt status and designating it for public amenity use, and it was bought by Bath city council in 1995. Even the department of transport spent much of the £70m cost of the Batheaston by-pass on sinking it beneath Bathampton Meadow to make it "the most environmentally friendly road scheme in Europe". It still is a beautiful country — but will not remain so if the trustees of Bath Rugby Club have their way.

The problem is that planning permission was given for a public recreation facility on the meadow back in 1991 and, as far as these dedicated and allegedly ear-biting sportsmen are concerned, that means six rugby pitches — four of them floodlit from 20ft high columns — together with a 10,000 sq ft pavilion with bars and restaurant and, to service all this, a car and coach park for 140 vehicles.

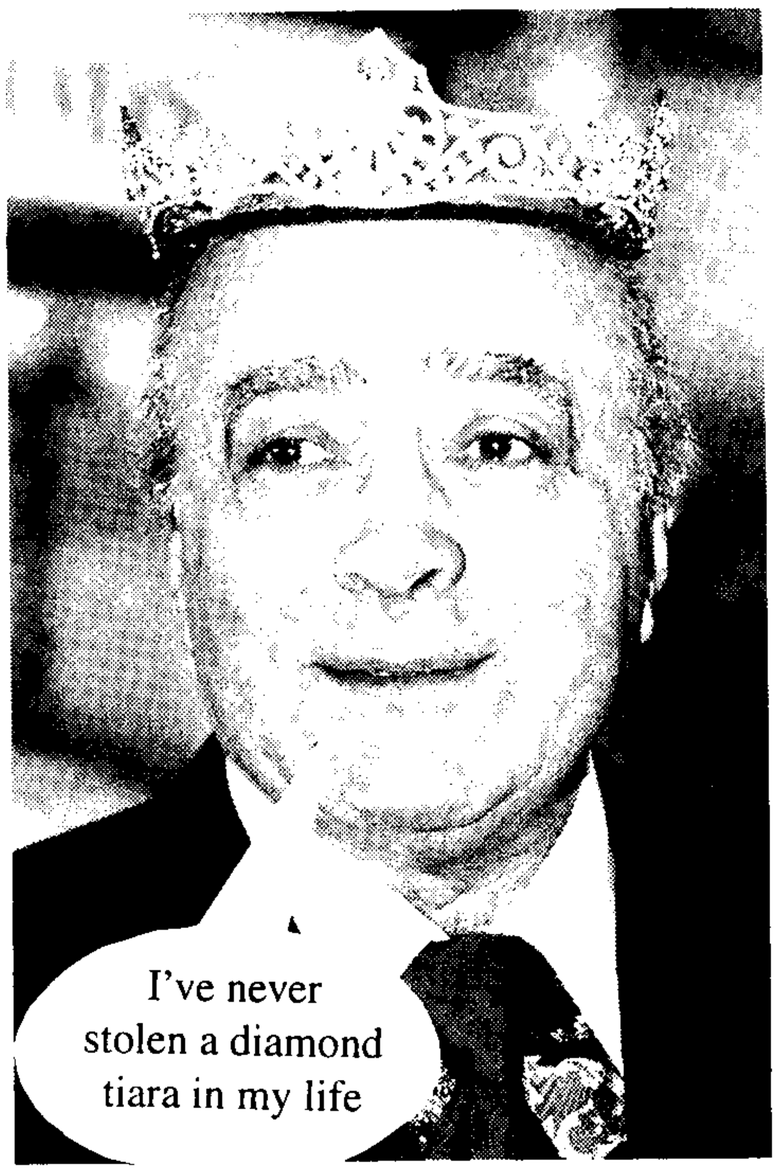
At the public inquiry on the 1991 application the inspector admitted that "the floodlighting proposals would have a harmful effect on the agricultural character and appearance of this part of the Bath green belt" and that "the traffic which would be generated by the proposals... would have a harmful effect... on the Bathampton conservation area". Moreover, what was proposed then was much smaller, with a pavilion only a third of the size.

Poor old Bath. A quarter of a century ago, at the height of the frenzy of destruction of one of the most beautiful cities in the world actively promoted by the then city corporation, a special issue of the *Architectural Review* noted that "perhaps the most important feature of Bath which gives it such a special nature and character is its topography". And in the Georgian period, when men knew how to build well and in a seemly fashion, the hillsides to the west of Bath were developed with terraces and villas to enjoy the view of the Avon across Bathampton Meadow. That remains a crucial part of what is still a beautiful and extraordinary city.

Well, times have changed since the 1970s — or have they? It may now be called Bath & North East Somerset council, but Bath is still run by the same sort of people. And, oddly enough, many of them are great rugby fans — even if they are not all thugs — sorry — trustees of Bath Rugby Club plc. So what will they do with this application to make part of the green belt look like a Gummer hypermarket in, say, Bracknell? We shall see. As we are slowly and painfully discovering, in Tony Blair's "new" Britain, sport is so much less elitist, so much more important than outmoded concepts like landscape and beauty.

'Piloti'

NEW FAYED SHOCK



THE YES MEN

THE Charities Commission has launched an investigation into the lavish bills for champagne and country-house hotels run up by bosses of the Year of Engineering Success (YES), the registered charity which was supposed to "raise the profile" of the engineering profession during 1997 (*Eye* 941).

Other sponsors are now beginning to wonder if all this browsing and sluicing actually achieved anything, and several have warned YES — which now wants to continue for the next five years — that it can't expect any more loot. Perhaps the most surprising sceptic is Richard Pike, director general of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. "We are reviewing our participation and seeking further details of objectives, planning, budgets and personnel," he told his institution's magazine, *Professional Engineering*, last week.

How odd. Last November Pike was furious when *Professional Engineering* published a leaked Mori poll showing that "the YES campaign to raise public awareness of engineering has failed miserably". He demanded to know how the magazine had obtained the poll, and asked the editor, John Dunn, to print an apology. Unwilling to comply, Dunn resigned at the beginning of January. Days later, Pike suddenly announced that he too was having doubts about YES. As one mechanical engineer commented: "I think the word 'irony' comes to mind."

What of the government? When John Major was still prime minister, the department of trade and industry handed over £500,000 to YES. Although there was no discernible return on this investment, "new" Labour's industry minister John Battle promised last month that the new YES campaign would get £75,000 from the DTI for "administration" for the next three years, plus £75,000 for "special projects". Battle said that the donation was conditional on having an "efficient and effective management team in place when it comes to spending the money".

Since the YES managers have been spectacularly ineffective — except when it comes to buying themselves large lunches and running up bar bills — isn't it time the cost-conscious new government followed the example of the Charities Commission and set up its own inquiry into this scandal?

EYE TV

TV ads
(all commercial channels)

NICE chap, that Steven Berkoff. Kind, unassuming, devilishly good-looking, restrained in thought and deed, he is, above all, loyal and supportive to his fellow actors.

"I would be disinclined to work with him in the future," said Robert Powell. "I am very shocked and also very surprised by his actions," said Prunella Scales. "I'm totally outraged," said Sir Derek Jacobi.

Berkoff's sin, as was widely reported last week, was to break a strike called by the actors' union Equity against the advertising industry. In their usual subtle way the ad men have been trying to reduce actors' fees for voiceovers by a clean 66 percent. Not because they need to — no industry in the world makes more money for less effort — but because they think they can as they regard actors as a soft touch.

It's straightforward bullying: actors are drastically underpaid by everyone else, and the ad men would like to underpay them too. The irony of Berkoff's contribution is that it has brought to public attention a dispute that had previously remained almost stubbornly invisible. It would be almost too rich if his breaking of the strike should actually help bring about the winning of the strike. Margaret Thatcher would be turning in her grave, if only she had one.

And yet, if you have been watching ads on TV recently, you may already have noticed the difference the strike has made. Many ads in the run-up to Christmas were recorded before the strike began in September, and general pre-Yule hysteria successfully distracted attention away from the rest. But since the new year, "normal" ads have returned to the screen and it has become rapidly apparent that the agencies are running out of options.

Some are just reshowing old ads, often with a zapped-up graphic or a remixed soundtrack. Others are using TV presenters and local radio DJs for voiceovers, or foreign actors for bit parts behind stars signed ages ago on long-term contracts (the strike does not cover these). A few, perhaps the most desperate of all, have turned to "real people" to fill their ad time. Just four weeks into the new advertising year, the strains are showing.

For example, there's the young couple in a Fiat Punto lost in the Italian countryside looking for their restaurant. Finally they select somewhere else apparently at random, where Driving Bloke discovers that Navigating Bird had a table booked all along. Yo ho! This ad was quite cute when first shown last year, and a little less cute after we had all seen it 5,000 times. But there is no new ad for Fiat Punto in 1998, so we are seeing the same ad again, over and over again. If sales do not plunge, there will be no justice.

And then there are the girls in the Renault (or is it a Peugeot?) driving through the desert until they bump into a pantomime sheikh who announces "I want them for my wives". They think he's talking about them, he knows he is talking about their car, and millions of viewers are thinking of talking to their solicitors if they ever have to see this ad again.

Some serial advertisers, such as Pantène, have fallen back on global advertising campaigns. The brand used to employ mainly British models and actresses for its 30-second exercises in Hair Porn, but the sheer turnover of its operation — Pantène ads change virtually daily — has recently necessitated the mass import of cheesy American ads, ineptly dubbed into proper English. Even this is no long-term solution — consumer resistance to foreign ads is well documented — so the agency's latest wheeze has been to announce, via an ad, a competition for ordinary people to appear in the next ad. This may of course be mere coincidence, and nothing at all to do with the Equity strike. Or it may be the last hope of desperate men.

Everywhere standards are falling. Most retailers' sales are now promoted by the firm's employees, all-wearing-company-uniforms-and-talking-like-Daleks. Royal & Sunalliance uses mirth-free yachtswoman Tracy Edwards ("We check the compass every minute and we live every second"). Fairy Liquid has returned with its first ever "real people" ad, shot in shaky camera verité like an episode of *NYPD Blue* — although sadly none of the characters dies in a hail of bullets. Some regular advertisers, such as British Telecom, appear to have given up altogether.

The ads, everyone tells you at dull dinner parties, are better than the programmes they interrupt. But while actors account for less than 3 percent of the budget of TV ads — about the same proportion as cocaine, according to one wag — they clearly account for rather more than 3 percent of their effectiveness. If the agencies don't notice this soon, it's possible that their clients just might.

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

EYEBROWS have been raised at the choice of Vanni Treves, a 57-year-old lawyer, as the new chairman of Channel 4. What are his qualifications for the job — apart from his membership of the Labour party in Islington South where he is a constituent of heritage secretary Chris Smith, who made the appointment?

"What the secretary of state clearly wished to find was a businessman, somebody with commercial and financial skills," Treves told the *Guardian* last week, adding that he had "little familiarity with the media world".

Too modest, dear fellow. On 6 August 1991 Treves was consulted by Peter Laister, a director of Maxwell Communications Corporation who had been alarmed to discover Cap'n Bob's unauthorised plunder of MCC cash. The legal counsel offered by Treves, senior partner at the City firm McFarlanes, is recorded in Tom Bower's book *Maxwell: The Final Verdict*.

"Don't make any public statement," Treves warned.

"Who can we tell?" asked Laister, who assumed it was his duty as a director to expose Maxwell's wrongdoing.

"Nobody. You must exercise absolute caution."

Two days later Laister returned to the lawyer's office, accompanied by three other directors who were worried by Cap'n Bob's crookery. Once again Treves advised them to keep mum. "You're in a dangerous position. You could be held liable for breaches of the Companies' Acts which require you to protect the shareholders' interests. You must urgently get all the facts, but don't talk to anyone, including the auditors. Talking to others could mean leaks..."

If Treves had told them to go public, Maxwell could have been stopped in his tracks. Instead, the fat fraudster was able to carry on pilfering for another three months — until he fell off his yacht and the whole enterprise sank with him.

"Too many cooks spoil the television"

THE choice of Granada chairman Gerry Robinson to head the Arts Council must have been easy — he manages an enormous TV company which daily contributes to the nation's culture.

Well, up to a point. Granada has the rare distinction of producing... no arts programmes itself whatever.

BARELY ten weeks old and the BBC's 24-hour news "service" is facing a "change of direction" — ie, a round of cuts.

Owing to a complete absence of overnight viewers, hourly 30 minute chunks of airtime will be given instead to BBC World, making News 24 an *almost* continuous news service for the first time. World will simply and cheaply "simulcast" its own programming into the News 24 void.

Jenny Abramsky, Director Almost Continuous News, explained: "While we remain committed to distinct services addressing each channel's audience needs, there are times when these needs coincide." Times when no one watches any of your output, for example, or times when a 20 percent cut in overall costs is demanded in order to pay for services like, er, News 24.

MEANWHILE "Outsourcing" continues at the Beeb. In December, 350 accounting staff from BBC Finance learned that their jobs were to be transferred from the BBC to MedAS, an external scheme run jointly by EDS and Coopers & Lybrand.

Pay and conditions remain unchanged, but "after transfer, you will only be allowed to apply for BBC jobs open to external candidates".

So that's bad news for staff with years of faithful, internal BBC service under their belts, who will only return to the Beeb stripped of their sometime lengthy years of service and pension entitlements. But good news for BBC directorates who can leave the small matter of funding "outsourced" redundancy payments to MedAS. Once BBC Resources is finally "outsourced" as a limited company, similar staff arrangements are expected there as well.

LORD WAKEHAM's departure as chair of the British Horseracing Board must be a relief to the busy peer.

Not only does he still have a dozen or so other jobs (chairmanship of the Press Complaints Commission and Vosper Thornycroft Holdings Ltd; directorships at N.M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd, Bristol and West Building Society, etc), but he doesn't actually like the sport he was paid to represent.

In 1994 as a member of the Tory government, he accepted an offer to speak at Stowe, the public school. For the dinner afterwards, the boys went to considerable trouble to find a suitable conversation partner. In *Who's Who* Wakeham listed "racehorse ownership" as a hobby, so Milo Corbett, son of legendary bloodstock-dealer John Corbett, was put next to him.

When the personable youth tried to engage "Wakey" in conversation, the politician told him curtly he "hated the sport". Odd that he lobbied so hard for the job.

Meanwhile, there has been much publicity for the heroic efforts Wakeham has made on behalf of the newspaper proprietors who pay his salary as the press complaints supremo in staving off the threat of privacy laws. But no British paper has yet published the speech he gave to the far-right Sydney Institute in Australia last autumn.

Referring warmly to his relationship with the proprietors, he observed: "Learning to handle the media is like learning to handle a wife." This remark, for reasons the former cabinet minister could not understand, was greeted by boos.

CNN is running a tasteful trailer for a travel programme about Egypt: lots of lingering, exotic shots of sunsets over the pyramids and assorted clichés, polished off with immortal line: "Egypt... where Agatha Christie comes to life!"

Surely they mean, er, "murder", as featured in Christie's *Death on the Nile*, not to mention the regular slaughter of defenceless tourists as perpetrated by Egypt's deranged (and heavily armed) extremist fundamentalists?

MAN IN THE EYE: Stephen Bayley

SO, Stephen Bayley, "creative director" [*sic*] of the Millennium Dome, has flounced out blaming Peter "Disney" Mandelson. If you are going to fall out with anyone it might as well be the most unpopular man in politics, but Bayley has still got off ridiculously lightly.

Described in the *New Statesman* as "one of the most prominent of the new generation of British designers" (what has he ever designed?), he joined the enterprise in a blaze of publicity, leaving partners in another company he was meant to join in the lurch. Having been introduced by them to the bigwigs at the Millennium, he decided to dump the previous commitment (after copious heartfelt letters of affection and respect) and join the New Millennium Experience Company instead.

Once there he achieved nothing on £80,000 a year despite his claim to be "the second most intelligent man in Britain". Evidence of this intellect is a little hard to come by but few will forget his performance in a meeting where design and live events companies were pitching their ideas for the dome. Bayley sat around saying nothing and looking languid for the entire proceedings. He then said to one of those presenting: "I have only one question. Where *did* you buy those shoes?" He now predicts that "the whole enterprise might be a fiasco".

This is not a unique point of view, but what would Bayley have put in the dome? In a pretentious piece in the *Spectator* before Christmas, he gave nothing away but predicted "thought-provoking exhibits and experiences which blur the distinction between education and entertainment whose accumulative effect is to equip the individual visitor with liberating insights into the present and future condition of his world".

Now, rejecting Mandy-Disney, he thinks that "the best architects and designers in the world, in technical partnership with the world's great companies, should present a challenging vision of the future". Never mind that this vapidity is just sucking up to his cronies and to past (and future?) employers — "Ford would show us the car of the future, Sainsbury the shop of the future..." — and that any vision of the future at any time is almost always *wrong* (and subsequently seems ludicrous), we are still not told *why* any of this should take place.

The 1851 Great Exhibition and the 1951 Festival of Britain had a clear purpose; 2000 has little meaning except in terms of the history and culture of Christianity, and that is dismissed with contempt by luminaries like Sir Terence Conran. "Given the associations with time of the millennium and of Greenwich, the entire 'experience' should be about the future," insists Conran's former employee. But, it could equally well be about the past. No chance of that: to pay for this fiasco, lottery funds for artistic and restoration projects are being reined in and the National Heritage Memorial Fund has virtually ceased to exist. Bayley will meanwhile continue with his absurd career. An article in *Design Week* last year began "Why do we all hate Stephen Bayley so much?" This is a rhetorical question.

WORLD OF HYPE

MEET The Press bills itself as "Britain's biggest PR training company", and its regular seminars bring together the cream of Britain's hype-merchants to listen to distinguished hacks drivelling on about how to get PR hype on to and into the media.

On 2 and 3 February, for instance, the seminar is at the Royal Society of Arts. The opening speaker is John Willman, consumer industries editor of the *Financial Times*, who will, the brochure boasts, "actually show you how to get *positive* editorial coverage in the *Financial Times*".

Other key speakers are Ray Wells, picture editor of the *Sunday Times* ("How to get photos in the press"); Anthony Hilton, City editor of the *Evening Standard* and consultant to the London stock exchange magazine ("how to get into the City press" — and even how to keep out of it, if necessary); John Perkins, editor IRN, ("how to get your story into the radio"); Dee Nolan, editor *YOU*, ("how to get into the colour supplements"); and even Adrian von Klaveren, news editor BBC News, ("how to get on to television").

Advice from such powerful and important hacks doesn't come cheap. The course fee for the two days is £934.71.

A NEW WORLD PRIZE TO RIVAL THE NOBEL was the challenging headline in the *Observer* on 11 January, under which one Nicos Devletoglou outlined his plan for an "Olympics of the brain" in which a commission of the "most creative minds" from all countries would gather to award a prize for an idea to solve one of the world's problems.

This prize, he argued, could be awarded for the first time in Greece in 2004, when Athens hosts the Olympic games. The new award would hark back to when "Greece represented the peak of the enlightenment".

A caption at the end of the article stated: "The author is a former Professor of Political Economy at Athens University". And so he is. Mr Devletoglou was moved in as the new professor after the old one (and anyone even remotely representing the spirit of Greek enlightenment or the force of idealism) was removed following the fascist coup in Greece in 1967.

The notorious colonels' regime which followed stamped out all signs of academic freedom or dissent until 1975 when to everyone's relief it was finally toppled. Almost at once, under a new elected government, the University of Athens got itself a new Professor of Political Economy.

DIANABALLS

"Tuesday 20 January. The Purpose of the Death of Diana. Special lecture offering an interpretation of the higher purpose of the life and death of Princess Diana, to be held at the Institut Francais."

— Events guide from the Neal's Yard Agency for Personal Development. (Submitted by Veronica Lee.)

"This year, as a tribute to the Princess of Wales, instead of sending out Christmas cards to partners and suppliers, we are donating our Christmas card budget to the Princess Diana Memorial Fund, after her tragic death this summer."

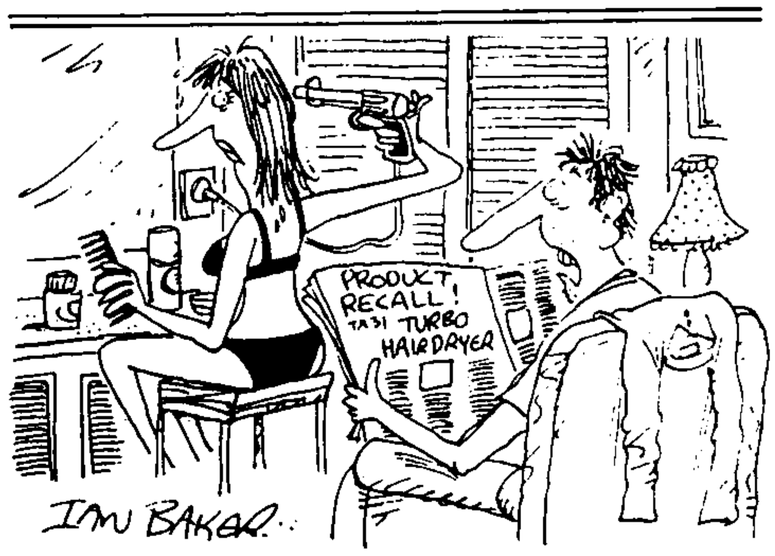
— Message from Ranger Oil, printed on laminated card and, er, posted to partners and suppliers.

"Our sincere thanks to the folks at Rhode Island Soft Systems for producing the beautifully done tribute that honours such a special woman. Using 20 stunning photographs, all licensed from the UPI, this screen saver will capture your heart and help you remember Diana."

— Advert for new Diana screen-saver on Compuserve's bulletin board. (Submitted by Simon Judge.)

"This Earth is but a pebble in the great pond of the universe./In countless universes, many rivers flow into many great ponds./They too shall find refuge in the rocks along the way./But behold! They will not, for a long time, find a rock as quintessential as you."

— Extract from a long poetic "Tribute to Princess Diana" from The Compliance Digest, *journal of the financial compliance industry.* ("Readers are reminded that the contents of this publication... are intended for general information only and not to give definitive technical and/or legal advice.")



"Stop, Doris!"

DOING THE ROUNDS

Graham Butland, Then and Now

IN APRIL 1993 (*Eye* 817) MD broke the news of Graham Butland, then macho general manager of Essex Family Health Service Authority, who has since risen to the post of chief executive of South Essex Health Authority — despite the *Eye*'s exposure of irregularities that occurred when the new contract for GPs was implemented.

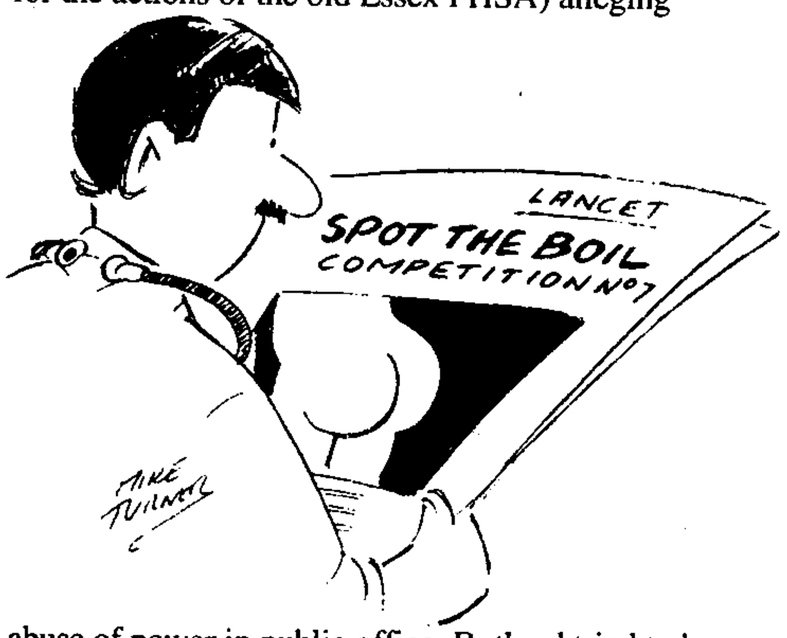
In May 1990, amid reorganisation of GP services in Essex, Butland had attended a meeting at which a plan was formulated to set up a phoney GPs' partnership which would have resulted in patients (and their lucrative capitation fees) being transferred to a surgery that their doctor had no intention of joining.

Absent through illness from the meeting was Dr John Cormack, an outspoken critic of the reforms Butland had been appointed to usher through. The proposed phoney partnership could have left Dr Cormack, who was staying put at his surgery, perilously short of patients and income.

Butland offered the services of the FHSA to mail patients and inform them of the nonexistent partnership. The deception was uncovered after the letters went out and when Dr Cormack came into possession of a tape recording of the meeting. He complained to the FHSA and sent a damning transcript of the meeting to the then chairman, a Major General Wall, who refused to investigate the matter or send letters of apology to the deceived patients.

Cormack then complained to the department of health. Alas, health secretary Kenneth Clarke had been a big fan of Butland after his threat to "kick doctors from one end of the county to the other", and incoming health secretary William Waldegrave took no action. Indeed, junior minister Stephen Dorrell judged Butland's actions to be "in accordance with the regulations" and said there was "no question of a phoney partnership".

Undeterred, in June 1996 Cormack served a writ on Buckland and North Essex HA (now responsible for the actions of the old Essex FHSA) alleging



abuse of power in public office. Butland tried to have the charges dismissed as frivolous and vexatious, but after two hearings this argument was dismissed by Master Trench and costs were awarded to Dr Cormack.

The case is now proceeding to trial. Butland's legal fees for his defence so far are estimated at up to £50,000, although these are currently being met by the health authority/taxpayer. Ironically South Essex HA is currently £9.8m in debt and Butland is planning draconian cuts. Under proposals to save £214,000, 21 ovarian cancer patients would die sooner than necessary and even the possibility of restricting the treatment of children with severe burns who could be expected to die has been discussed. Fortunately it was decided in this case that the burns savings were modest in return for the potential suffering and the option was not pursued.

The health authority is, however, planning £664,000 mental health cuts, and the Disabled Information Advice Line, Basildon Crossroads, the Basildon Carers Centre, the Billericay and Wickford Council for Voluntary Service and the South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Line look set to go. As Butland put it: "There is an issue of how much you spend on a patient when the prognosis is extremely poor. These questions have to be debated in public." By Buckland?

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

THE Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the latest group trying to convince the world that everything on the fragmented rail system is tickety-boo.

When the office of rail passenger franchising (Opraf) puts on rose-tinted specs (*Eyes passim*) the result is that train companies are allowed to provide a pisspoor service while collecting huge bonuses from public funds. When a safety body becomes apparently blasé, the result could be far more damaging.

Although the HSE railway inspectorate's report on rail safety in 1996/97 contains evidence of safety *not* being improved as required, chief inspector of railways Stan Robertson said at the report's launch: "Safety matters under direct control of railway operators have, in the main, improved whereas safety in other areas, such as trespass and vandalism, have got worse."

How safety has improved is hard to fathom from the report.

For example, thousands of old carriages which were to have been strengthened or replaced by this year following the Clapham Junction crash are still in service. But instead of issuing reprimands and threatening legal action, the HSE says safety has in the main, er, improved.

Another point needing attention is that of trains passing red signals. The Tories promised automatic train protection (ATP) after Clapham, but the report states: "As at mid-1997 this had still not been achieved for Great Western lines, apparently due to unresolved reliability problems." (The Southall crash would have been prevented by working ATP.)

Another device, the driver reminder appliance, is to cover areas where ATP will not be applied. Railtrack chairman Bob Horton promised this would be fitted to all traction units *by the end of 1997*. "As at mid-1997, installation had not yet started and it is understood that it is now proposed to fit the DRA only to a subset of traction units identified on the basis of risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis," reveals the report. ("Understood" shows the HSE is not told of Railtrack's money-saving intentions.) Railtrack also promised that trials of another device, the train protection warning system, would finish by the end of 1996. "Railtrack currently anticipate that they will not now start until late 1997," says the report.

Elsewhere the report highlights rail companies' simplistic approach to risk assessment and a bias towards "cost benefit analysis" on matters of safety, a double whammy which ignores the potential for harm.

Despite hard evidence of decay in the rail safety culture, Robertson concludes: "Vandalism will probably be the greatest threat to safety on the railways for the foreseeable future." If vandalism is such a threat, how can safety be improving when the anti-vandalism budget has been cut from £3m to £100,000?

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

SINCE retiring last year as head of the Maffia's livestock division, Geoffrey Hollis has taken up well-paid employment as a consultant to the agriculture ministries of various east European countries now eagerly queuing up to join the European Union.

He was therefore surprised to hear Dr Jack "T-Bone" Cunningham recently tell the Oxford Farming Conference that countries like Hungary and Poland would be ill-advised to inflict on themselves all the insane bureaucracy of the EU's common agricultural policy because this would be like returning to the "old command economy they have so recently and painfully shaken off".

Not so, opines Hollis. It would be far, far worse. Nothing has shocked him more on his peregrinations round the old Communist ministries than to find how *few* bureaucrats they employ. "If they have to take on the CAP in its present form, they will have to increase the number of their civil servants between ten and twentyfold."

● **ONE of the less-publicised achievements of the ever-growing army of officials running the CAP is the strangely obsessive war they seem to be waging against the harmless practice of goat-keeping. Not only do they submerge Europe's unfortunate goat-owners in the usual avalanche of paperwork and "hygiene" rules, they seem determined to end one of the most basic distinctions known to man, the age-old difference between goats and sheep.**

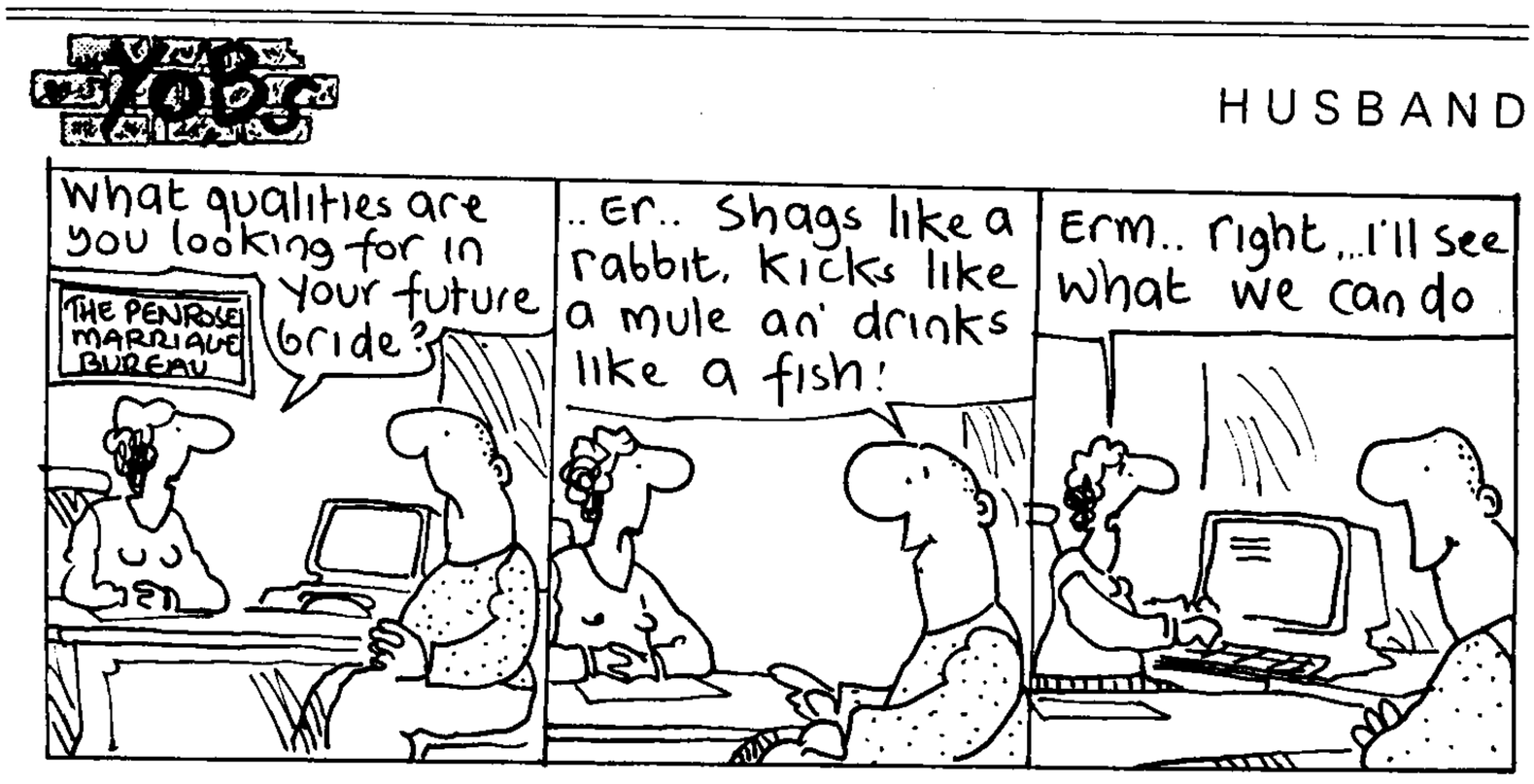
This began with EU directive 92/102, implemented in Britain by the "Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) Order 1996". Sheep and goat owners were notified that all their animals should now be fitted with numbered ear-tags. Whenever their animals were moved off the holding where they were born — even if only a single sheep or goat was taken to the orchard across the road owned by another farmer — a form should be filled in and lodged with the local "Animal Health Office". Not to comply was a criminal offence, risking a fine up to £2,000 or six months in prison.

Then goat owners were faced with the "Heads of Sheep and Goats Order 1996", which made it a criminal offence to sell for human consumption any part of a sheep or goat's head, other than the tongue. This was because, scientists had suddenly decided that there might just be the remotest possibility that someone eating a sheep with scrapie might contract CJD.

Not even those scientists had ever suggested there was the slightest risk of anyone catching CJD from eating the brains of *goats*. Goats do not contract scrapie, a disease specific to sheep. Nevertheless, so determined are the EU officials to insist that sheep and goats are, in bureaucratic terms, the same animal, that all the ever-growing plethora of laws relating to sheep must now apply equally to goats, even where this has no shred of scientific justification.

Indeed, in this campaign to eliminate any separation between sheep and goats, Brussels and its Maffia collaborators have now played their trump card. In Commission Decision 97/534, implemented by the "Specified Risk Material Order 1997", they have ruled that those parts of sheep and goats which it is a criminal offence to sell must now include "the spleen and, from animals over 12 months old or with at least one permanent front tooth, the tonsils and spinal cord". And just to rub in the point, the regulations solemnly lay down that the carcases of young goats "under 12 months old or with no permanent teeth" may still be transported with the backbone in place — so long as these have been officially stamped in the abattoir "Young Lamb".

'Even Newer Muckspreader'


Yobs
HUSBAND
What qualities are you looking for in your future bride?
THE PENROSE MARRIAGE BUREAU
..Er.. Shags like a rabbit, kicks like a mule an' drinks like a fish!
Erm.. right...I'll see what we can do

Rotten Boroughs

Hackney

MALCOLM JACKSON, whom Hackney Labour party hired to do some of its dirty work in the Mark Trotter affair (*Eyes passim* and national papers last week), has come a cropper.

He was one of two town hall officers sent two years ago to snoop on Hettie Peters, the social services chair who angered Labour colleagues by exposing Trotter's abuse of children in care.

Political opponents tried to frame Peters over false housing benefit claims but she was exonerated. Jackson has since left Hackney to join the London Office Against Fraud, but is now himself in trouble having been *breathalysed* by Inspector Knacker of Cumbria police over Christmas.

Although Jackson was cleared of drink-driving, Knacker wasn't impressed by his boasts of contacts in the Met, particularly at the notorious Stoke Newington nick. Suspicious, Knacker searched Jackson's car — and claimed to have found three handguns. He has been taken in for questioning.

Junket of the Week

TRADING standards officers from Bent and Croydon have returned from all-expenses paid fact-finding missions to Sweden courtesy of furniture manufacturer IKEA.

Councillors in both areas backed the four-day trip after auditors told them there was no conflict of interest in accepting IKEA's hospitality and that letting IKEA pay for the trip would save the councils money.

Coincidentally IKEA's store in Croydon attracts more complaints than any of its other UK outlets, while Bent is home to IKEA's UK headquarters. Clearly neither trading standard department will shirk its duty to prosecute IKEA when it breaks the law. But why did they have to go all the way to Scandinavia to find out how IKEA deals with complaints from irate shoppers over there?

Rhondda

LIKE nice Mr Blair, Taffia members in Rhondda-Cynon-Taff have had to make some hard choices: withdrawing home helps from pensioners while awarding themselves an extra £50 a day expenses for trips abroad and spending £90,000 on refurbishing the mayor's parlour at Pentre.

And any questions about council tax rises or service cuts should be addressed to the new £25,000 a year political assistant to the Labour group whose job is to "present their views in a coherent and comprehensive manner" and "to generate positive stories, information and coverage of council business". Shame voters will find it harder to read his spin as newspapers and magazines in local libraries are being cut back.

Bargain of the Week

NEWARK & Sherwood council Labour leader Gill Dawn has been suspended by her group after a property developer told Labour officers he had bunged her bottles of perfume and brandy for help with planning applications.

The developer, Dennis Thompson, also happens to chair Newark Labour party. He told local hacks he had given Dawn four bottles of Liebfraumilch for "getting me mam a flat". She denies the allegations.

Meanwhile the party is also investigating allegations that councillors have received loans from council funds to buy cars and which they can repay from attendance allowances. Funnily enough, one member taking advantage of the generosity is, er, Gill Dawn, who obtained a loan despite having received an adverse county court judgment over an unpaid debt.

Glasgow

FORMER council Labour group leader Jean McFadden has put the cat among the pigeons. She says the claims of suspended leader Bob Gould that some colleagues bartered votes for domestic and foreign trips are not the only issue.

According to McFadden, some Labour councillors have traded votes for well paid political/council posts; a Bailie's (deputising lord provost) chain of office; the role of justice of the peace; and various "You help keep my school open and I'll vote for you when it matters" local scams.

She also reveals that the cost of attending a conference on council business might be £200 but legitimate allowances of up to £600 can be claimed. "It's all about honour and there is nothing illegal in what is done. No receipts are required." She adds: "A hotel allowance of £100 may be paid, yet the cost involved may be £25 for bed and breakfast with the person involved pocketing the difference. Allowances for many foreign trips can be up to £250 per day. It's a system of allowances, not a reimbursement of costs incurred."

Meanwhile Heather Ritchie, one of nine suspended from the Labour group for accepting freebies, has been fined £200 at Glasgow district court after being convicted of assaulting Brian McKenna, whom she hit in the mouth after a row at a political meeting. Ritchie has no intention of stepping down from the council, so will Labour get tough on crime and tough on its causes?

Recruitment skills

THE North Essex branch of William Hague's new sleaze-free Tory party has just appointed a new treasurer: a solicitor who, local Tory agent Rona Hammond admitted, had been "very silly" when he misappropriated £30,000 of clients' money.

Still, Essex Tories have every confidence in his abilities — even though his "silly" misdemeanours included the "dishonest misappropriation" of £11,000 meant for the RNLI and charities for the blind. The man was struck off but repaid the money in full.

Conflict of Interest I

GWYNEDD county council's grudging internal inquiry into how the Clynnog and Trefor Motor Company won a school transport contract while its chairman, Dr John Trefor Williams, was chief accountant of the council's technical services department, has left Dr Williams looking "whiter than white". Odd then that he has since been moved to another post...

Conflict of Interest II

THE Tories who took over from Labour in Bracknell Forest last year are as determined as their predecessors to ram through a massive new shopping development which could wreck nearby town centres like Slough and Reading. Why the cross-party support?

Er, the council's partners in the scheme are Legal & General, who, coincidentally, have promised to provide the borough with a brand new whizzbang civic centre complete with scores of free parking spaces.

Conflict of Interest III

PLAID CYMRU's emphasis on the need to increase the use of public transport was undermined recently in its newsletter by a full-page ad for a bus company based in Pontypridd: Jones Motors, which runs Shamrock Coaches and had just been criticised by its local council after 42 percent of its services were unsatisfactory over a three-month period.

Shamrock buses are notoriously shabby and the company was so bad at maintaining its vehicles the operator's licence was taken away from proprietor Clayton Jones, leaving his wife Alison to take over responsibility. But such misdemeanours are of no import to Plaid Cymru in Pontypridd — where Clayton Jones is a prominent party member and until recently a councillor.

Pseuds Corner

The primitive dialogue and minimalist plots mask a carefully constructed philosophy — cosmology even — of Teletubbieland. The teletubbies live in a world called Over the Hills and Far Away, which is, according to their creator, Anne Wood, 'the land where television comes from, the land of childhood, the land of nursery rhymes'. This statement highlights Wood's view that central to the contemporary toddler's world, along with more traditional ingredients such as nursery rhymes and teddy bears, is technology, and most important, television.

Both the windmill and the voice trumpets (whose ability to pop up anywhere has surveillance society overtones) are located on the hill, and while the casual viewer may not appreciate the significance of these two items, they are integral to the working of the Teletubbies world. 'The windmill is a device for the announcement of change. It speeds up when something magical is about to happen. And it's also a vehicle for transmitting pictures to the Teletubbies' tummies.'

NICOLA GODWIN
Daily Telegraph's Connect Magazine

[Peter] Tatchell says there is scant information about Jesus's sexuality: "We don't know for sure whether Jesus was straight, gay, bisexual or celibate. There is certainly no evidence for the Church's presumption that he was heterosexual. Nothing in the Bible points to him having desires or relationships with women. The possibility of a gay Christ cannot be ruled out.

"Since there is no proof of the heterosexuality of Jesus, the theological basis of Church homophobia is all the more shaky and indefensible."

OutRage!

It [the modern telephone box] represents not stability and lawful order but movement and unceasing change; it is a visible reminder of the futility of listening for ancestral voices amid the din of the city. You do not enter the New York telephone booth, but reach out to it as you pass. It is not the symbol of a permanent home, with which you can at any moment make soothing contact. It is a place from which you cry for help into a void from which help can never come.

ROGER SCRUTON
Prospect Jan '98

Paradoxically, the greatest deadener of good eating is engrossing conversation. 'I'm often tempted to accept invitations to dinner parties given by crashing bores,' says writer and Cambridge academic, Rachel Swift, 'because it's an excellent opportunity to switch off and savour the food. The colleges put on fantastic seven-course dinners and, in a way, it's rather a waste. Sometimes I'm so engrossed in the metaphysics of universal truth, the whole meal passes me by.'

BBC Good Food Magazine

Since the creation of the first Hyphen sculpture in 1975, Neagu has maintained vitality within the subject by continuously examining its iconic form and its underlying theoretical allegories, which he believes are open to each viewer's interpretation. As of November 1997, his definition of Hyphen is 'an epigenetic form obtained from within the phenomenal nature of dynamic non-being'.

Brochure for Angela Flowers Gallery

CONTRIBUTORS: Michael Orpen-Palmer, Anon, Godfrey Gudgeon, E. McLarty, Sandy Dunbar.

£10 paid for entries.

"Stupid amount, stupid amount... do I hear ridiculous?"

ART NEWS

TIMOTHY CLIFFORD, flamboyant director of the National Galleries of Scotland, has been caught misbehaving again — but, as usual, seems to have got away with it.

Two years ago Clifford — aka "Tim O'Shanter" — earned himself a light slap on the wrist when the *Eye* revealed he had broken the Museums Association's code of ethics by secretly selling a private collection of Renaissance medals. Last week the trustees of the National Galleries again gave him a mild rebuke after learning of his improper antics in another part of his empire, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

The saga began last year following the retirement of the SNPG's director, Duncan Thomson. Clifford's plan was to install a charming young woman he had met in London, even though she had no discernible knowledge of Scottish portraiture — or indeed any Scottish art or history. But the spoilsports on the appointments board decided unanimously that the job should go to the leading authority on Scottish portraiture, James Holloway.

Not to be thwarted, Clifford promptly made her deputy director of the SNPG — a hitherto non-existent post which hadn't even been advertised. He then got on the blower to inform the now dispersed members of the appointments board of his cunning wheeze. There was some surprise, not least from the Scottish office representative Gerald Wilson, whose duty was to ensure fair play.

"What's all this about?" Wilson asked jokily. "She's not your mistress, is she?"

"No — is she yours, Gerry?" Clifford quipped.

The gallery's senior curators were rather less amused. They lodged an official complaint pointing out that Clifford had disregarded the Scottish office rules of procedure and the civil service management code, which the National Galleries are legally obliged to uphold.

In his defence, Clifford claimed it was the board who had chosen his *protegée* — and had only appointed James Holloway on condition she was made deputy keeper. This was untrue, as an internal inquiry discovered. At their meeting on 12 January, the trustees reprimanded Clifford for his "unprofessional conduct" but agreed that the whole affair should be hushed up, having been assured by the miscreant that he would be a good boy in future.

On past form, this seems a forlorn hope.

The women, who wore blue ribbons around their wrists to distinguish them from female bankers and the waitresses, helped welcome partygoers and mingled with guests. A spokesman for the fund managers said: "The extra female staff were hired to help the evening go with a bang, but they certainly weren't pros-

Sunday Times

Letters

Joint venture

Sir,

What I have not seen in any newspaper is the fact that William Straw has set a legal precedent. From now on, anyone in the Metropolitan area, charged not only with possession and the non-existent crime of "illegal use" (R.B. Boyesen 1982), but selling cannabis, has an automatic defence of selective prosecution by the police and Crown Prosecution Service, in favour of the rich and powerful and their friends and relatives.

It would be ironic if William Straw has "Amsterdammed" most of London, succeeding where the rich kids, bored and upper middle class, involved in Release and the Legalise Cannabis Campaign in the 60s and 70s failed.

Yours faithfully,
RODERICK SAUNDERS,

Birmingham.

Every Which way

Sir,

Your accusation, casting doubt on the integrity of WHICH? *reports and claiming that CA has rigged one of its credit card "best buy" charts, is nonsense (Wicked Which?, 26 December).*

We are completely independent in all our research. In the areas of credit cards and internet provision, we have taken extra steps to ensure our members and the public can be absolutely confident that our integrity is guaranteed. As the leading consumer organisation it's hardly surprising that we only lend our name to a credit card that we hope would make it a best buy compared with others.

External audit panels have been appointed by our trustees to ensure that all CA's research and reporting in these areas is unbiased and reflects only the consumer interest. Their reports are available to the public. Are you seriously suggesting that the panel members are dishonest?

We have always been completely open about our links with NTL Internet (in press releases and in pages on our website) since Which? Online was launched.

Next time you intend to put CA in the spotlight, perhaps you will care to get your facts right.

Yours faithfully,
ASHLEY HOLMES,

Head of Legal Affairs, Consumers' Association.

Quilt complex

Sir,

Tuesday 13/1/98 news on radio & TV, both mentioned the interesting evening class, being run on how to fit a Duvet cover.

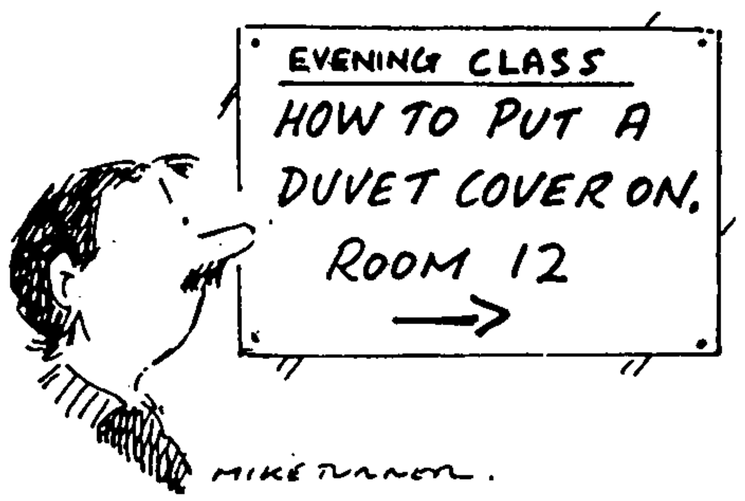
I seem to recall a similar message being displayed by your cartoonist Mike Turner in EYE *883 (page 7).*

Are they by any chance related?

(Does it really take two years for the ideas first portrayed by the EYE *to become part of the educational process? Is this another example of a Raising of Standards?)*

More power to your Organ.
ALAN STANDISH,

Via e-mail.



"Brits! You can tell them anywhere!"

Consumer goods

Sir,

Clearly you dislike the Consumers' Association, which might be fair enough, I'm sure you know more than I. But to describe its internet service as "costly" (EYE *940, page 11) strikes me as somewhat unfair when £15 a month buys unlimited use of the internet plus access to all* WHICH? *publications. If you can recommend a better value I will gladly investigate it.*

IAN DAVIS,

Via e-mail.

The Tamworth Two

Sir,

Thinking how scared the runaway pigs in Malmesbury must have been, myself and a friend decided that a charity single released on their behalf would be fitting. So here it is, TROTTERS IN THE WIND '98.

Goodbye ginger pig,
We will never see you on our plates,
In the form of rashers,
Or a juicy gammon steak.

Because you did not die,
Oh the press they hounded you,
But all I could think about
Was pork and onion stew.

And I would have liked to have eaten you,
But I guess I never will,
Your trotters ran off long before,
The abattoir could kill.

And it seems to me you (That's enough. Ed.)

SEB BLAIR & NATHAN ANSELL,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike

Straw

Demon

Sir,

Has anybody noticed the startling resemblance between scourge of all drug dealers Mr Jack Straw and that scourge of all children the Demon Headmaster? Are possibly both their campaigns to be despotic rulers of all they survey related? I think the Education Secretary should be told!

MARK HUNTER,

Via e-mail.

I-SPY *T-shirt design, New York*

Submitted by Anon. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Farewell bid

Sir,

If Derek Wyatt MP had really raised £75m in matching funds for his Millennium Bid at the Ally Pally (Letters, Debt Collector, 8 January) it seems pretty strange that he forgot to mention this to anybody at the time. Not to the council, not to the board of trustees responsible for the running of the Ally Pally. Not, even to the Millennium Commission, who might have taken rather more notice if £75m had been mentioned on the application form than it would to "funds being sought" which was what Wyatt said.

Some points of fact which Wyatt, as a national elected rep might care to have clarified:

1. The Palace does not have a £55m debt. Wyatt, who was chair when this issue was resolved by the treasury solicitor, should have managed to take that on board by now.

2. As a member of the heritage committee, he might have twigged that English Heritage was accountable to the minister.

3. If he thinks publicity makes cases "stack up" he perhaps needs to investigate the workings of the English legal system.

Yours bemusedly,
JULIET SOLOMON.

STEPP (Safeguard the Environment of the Park and Palace), London N10.

Order of merit

Sir,

Derek Wyatt MP argues (Letters, EYE *941) that Alexandra Palace is worthless because "One of our leading international architects said to me that it was a building with no architectural merits at all". Given the quality of the buildings erected by today's "leading international architects", as so often highlighted in your organ's Nooks & Corners column, this is surely a conclusive argument for its preservation.*

Yours faithfully,
ROD PARKES,

Taipo, Hong Kong.

List less

Sir,

*Derek Wyatt MP, in his letter about Alexandra Palace (*EYE *941), tells us "English Heritage, an unelected quango accountable to itself, chose to list it [the Palace]." This is curious. I quote from the Department of the Environment guidance on identifying and recording the historic environment, "Scheduling and listing are undertaken by the Secretary of State; designation of conservation areas is the responsibility of local planning authorities. In addition, English Heritage compiles registers of parks and gardens of special historic interest, and of historic battlefields."*

There is nothing about English Heritage having the power to list anything, and certainly not historic buildings. As the guidance says, it is, of course, the secretary of state who lists buildings. Could one of our elected representatives be shooting his mouth off without knowing what he is talking about, or is the secretary of state an unelected quango? We should be told.

Yours sincerely,
CHRISTOPHER PADLEY,

Market Rasen, Lincolnshire.

"I Got You Babe..."

Sick benefit

Sir,

Am I the only reader who is "filled with disgust" at the constant inclusion of letters from people "filled with disgust" by what they find in your magazine? Why do they read the bloody thing in the first place if they are of such a nervous disposition?

I have bought your periodical for nearly 30 years in the hope that it would contain something I might find totally appalling and in sickening bad taste. So far you've been nowhere near.

If anyone is due a refund I think it is me.

Yours sincerely,
ALASTAIR FRASER,

Bristol.

All very Wells

Sir,

Just got the terrible news on the radio... first Rushton and now Wells taken with years of laughter-making still to come.

I cannot hear "Ol' Man River" without thinking back to my student days seeing Wells on TV one Sunday night at the height of Watergate, singing "Ol' Man Nixon... he must know something but he don't say nothing..." etc. Pure genius!

Condolences all round,
JOHN EVANS,

Marple Bridge, Cheshire.

Sir,

Those who were taught French by John Wells at Eton prized him for two things. He wore Chelsea boots at a time when they were avant-garde, and his way of teaching spoken French skills. This involved Wells beginning a story in French, which each pupil had to continue ad lib in turn round the class, the story becoming more disjointed and surreal with each successive speaker. Whatever the story, Wells would invariably end it with the words, "...et enfin la grandmère de Scrimgeour a explodée!" (Scrimgeour being one of the quieter and most good natured members of the class.)

Yours sincerely,
SIMON BOYD,

Cambridge.

Sir,

No matter how threatening the morning, I know I can start the day with "One for the road" and Dear Bill. Combined with a good shit, it's kept me sane and regular for the past 15 years. RIP John Wells.

I remain,
S. OLDFIELD,

London W3.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Gay men have changed their sexual behaviour, but it's extremely difficult to keep it up year after year."
JAMIE TAYLOR, Radio 5 Live
(Mike Phillips)

Interviewer: *What was the last book or books you read?*
Howard Kendall: *My own autobiography which, interestingly enough, was written by the Guardian's Ian Ross.*
Guardian
(Gordon Jones)

"He [WBA manager Denis Smith] is putting his mouth where his hopes are!"
Sky
(Christian Vaughan)

"A practising Roman Catholic, he [Sonny Bono] is survived by his fourth wife Mary and four children from his various marriages."
The Times
(David Tee)

"It could have been divine intervention or just an act of God..."
Newsreader, News West
(Ian Taylor)

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"It was my big moment, and I wanted to make sure I pronounced the verdict clearly," a jury foreman confessed to reporters outside the courthouse in Newmarket, Ontario. I had a cough, and a fellow juror had offered me some of her baby's Tixylix medicine which she kept in her handbag, but I refused. After I'd said: 'We find the accused...', I cleared my throat of phlegm before saying 'guilty as charged'. The other jurors agreed that that was the verdict of us all, and we filed back into the jury room. By the time we'd discovered that the judge thought my cough was the word 'not', it was too late. The defendant had already been released and had rushed out of the building."

Thus ended the trial of Howard Burke, a 31-year-old accused of murder. Sergeant John Sheldon of York Regional Police explained that there had been "...a miscommunication. The jury all heard the cough, but Justice Edwin Minden, the Crown attorney, the defence lawyer, the court registrar, and the court stenographer all thought they'd heard the word 'not'. The prosecution lawyer was so astonished by the verdict that he appealed to the judge to ask each juror individually. So he did, and they all said they agreed with the foreman. So the jury were dismissed, the clerk of the court entered a not guilty verdict in the court records, and Burke fairly sprinted out of the courtroom. In retrospect, I think he'd realised it was a cough too.

"Ted Minden is a wonderful judge, and no one is to blame. This whole bag of tricks has been a real mixup, and an extremely dangerous man is now at large in the state of Ontario. If only the foreman had taken the Tixylix, this would never have happened." *(Saint John Telegraph Journal, 20/09/97. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

—o—

"Announcing the Planning Phase of Marianland – A Catholic Theme Park.

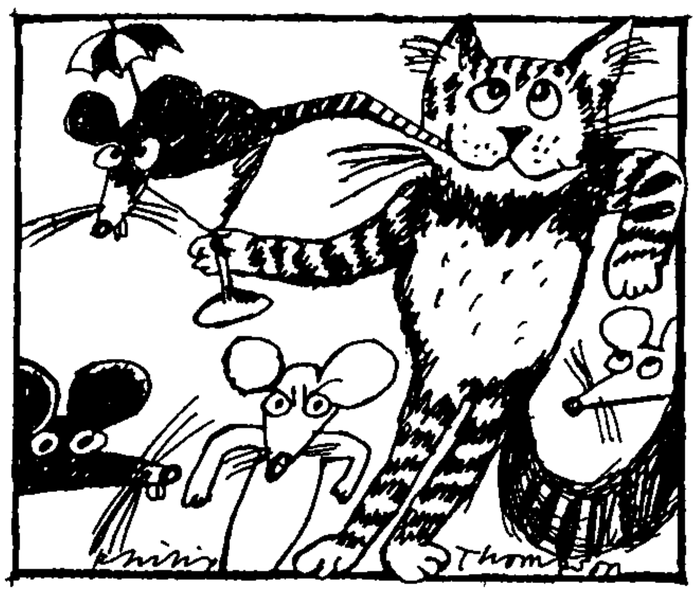
"Plans are being made to construct a theme park where Catholic and other Christian Families can have a great time. Marianland will have replicas of Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, Medjugorje, Knock, the Holy Land, the Vatican, and other significant Holy Places.

"Marianland Theme Park will have special rides in Heaven, Purgatory and, of course, Hell. Marianland visitors will be able to witness the reenactment of the Life of Christ and all Saints. Marianland Theme Park will have giant movie screens where insight to Miracles, Lives of Saints, and Real Sciences can be viewed. Please consider supporting this bold endeavour by faithfully praying for it to become a reality. And remember, cheques are as good as prayer. Marianland, 3350 Highway 6, Suite 412, Sugar Land, Texas 77478." *(Marianland publicity brochure. Spotter: Don Fowler)*

—o—

"It is not a problem at just one police station. Rats in almost all the stations are consuming countrymade liquor," Mohindra Sucheta, Delhi's deputy commissioner of police told reporters. "I have even seen drunken rats playing on my table and chair during the night, but could not do anything."

Speaking in Jafarpur Kalan police station, commissioner Sucheta elaborated on the problem. "In the old days, people kept their illicit



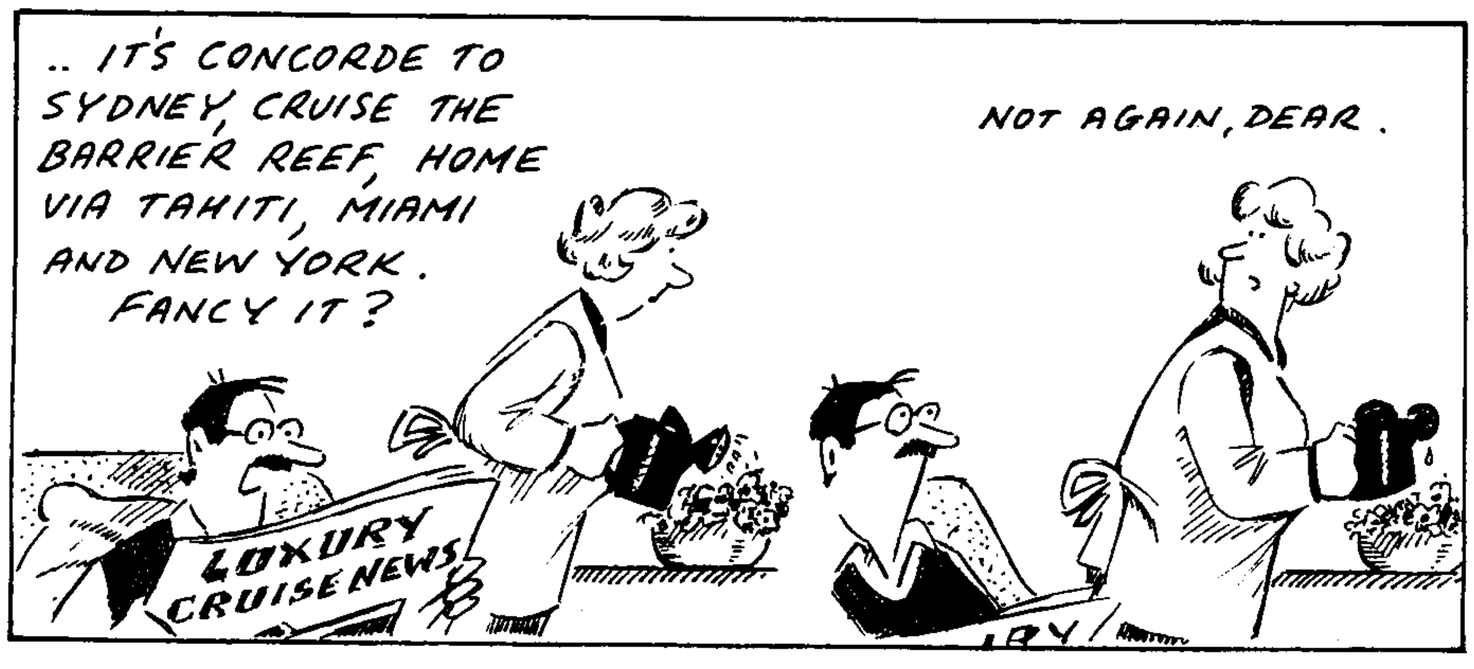
booze in bottles, but recently they began using plastic pouches, which are much cheaper. When we confiscate it, we store it in the station, but rats and mice can easily tear the pouches open and drink the contents. The results are disgusting. Tipsy rodents are absolutely fearless, and they ignore all attempts by the police to drive them away. In some cases, the creatures become addicted, and turn violent and go on a biting spree when they find no booze.

"Here at Jafarpur Kalan, we decided to combat the menace by enlisting a cat, and setting it loose on the rats. At first this plan succeeded, because the rats were too drunk to resist, but lately the cat has begun eating the rodents, and becomes drunk himself. After a while, he just staggers about, unable to deal with the remaining vermin. It is getting out of hand. I am considering resignation." (Gulf Times, 24/12/97. Spotter: Mrs Jennifer Nield)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

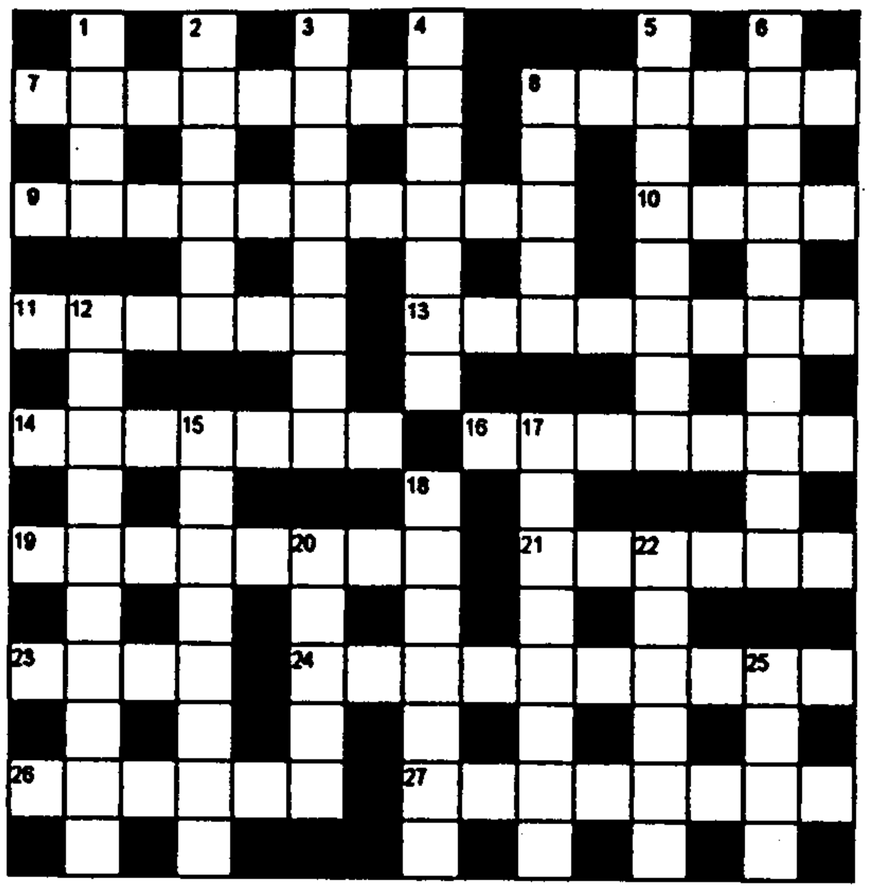
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


.. IT'S CONCORDE TO SYDNEY, CRUISE THE BARRIER REEF, HOME VIA TAHITI, MIAMI AND NEW YORK. FANCY IT?
NOT AGAIN, DEAR.
LUXURY CRUISE NEWS
JAY

EYE CROSSWORD 97

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

7 Yet another food shop swamping hospital? Capital! (3,5)
8 The extremes of treachery and sweet talk (name? — Maxwell?) (6)
9/10 An undertaking of Mandelson: empty for all we know? (10,4)
10 (see 9)
11 *Blur* spot? (6)
13 Spare testicles (nuts) (8)
14 Chris Evans, for example, and American sat stupidly around getting fixes (7)
16 Women's underwear being worn containing name of unsuccessful would-be high-flier (7)
19 Bill's vice: hackneyed, self-evident statement and affecting to put others first (8)
21 Busty model having left is out of a job (6)
23 Arsehole — one backing tabloid (4)
24 Put up by bad sailors glad to have a bonk? (5,5)
26 Fancying shoving one roughly in familiar Labour backbencher (4,2)
27 Universal sex once rampant, but that's not a justification (2,6)

DOWN

1 Grab a little shut-eye, Tiggy, shaggy haunter of the snowy slopes (4)
2 Rotten Count Dracula started letting in the French (6)
3 Minister, dull, without weight and bearing — prat finally (8)
4/18 An outstanding contribution to surgical development in recent years? (7,7)
5 Tart to do a Brenda, reportedly: it makes for a bad atmosphere (4,4)
6 Does it lap it up, escaping the government ban? (7,3)
8 Wimpish, disgraced Minister with primitive instincts (5)
12 Abusive type's support for cracked member into killing — right away (10)
15 Getting an erection is a revolting thing! (8)
17 As Blair's hair was — and his socialism (8)
18 (see 4)
20 Jowell's first socially OK hostelry outside for the native American (5)
22 Conservative load of balls on church where members join body (6)
25 Anybody's laid-back (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 30.01.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 96

Winner: MRS JOAN V. CALDICOTT

ACROSS: 1 Girl power 6 Quit 9 Townies 10 Cleaver 11 Obese 12 Identikit 13 Raleigh 15 Spouses 16 Escapes 19 La Scala 21 Overthrow 22 Brier 23 Entreat 24 Okinawa 25 Shit 26 (see 3).

DOWN: 1 Get your leg over 2 Raw deal 3/26/6dn Prime Ministers Questions 4 W H Smith 5 Rickets 6 (see 3) 7 Invokes 8 British Airways 14 In-patient 17 Cheetah 18 Scrotum 19 Low-down 20 Agitate 22 Brits.

THRIBB BREAKS LONG SILENCE Poetry World Stunned

by Our Poetry Staff
Tom Apaulin

THE distinguished poet E.J. Thribb has broken 30 days of *self-imposed silence* following the tragic break-up of his relationship with fellow teenage poet Sylvia Krin (16½).

Thribb has always refused to comment on the affair, despite claims by feminists that Thribb was personally to blame for Sylvia failing her mock A-Levels, having a "bit of a nervous breakdown" and going to stay with her auntie in Eastbourne.

Now he has produced a new sequence of 94 poems called "Happy Birthday" in which the poet chronicles their doomed relationship.

Here is the pivotal poem — now reproduced *only* in the *Eye*:

So. Farewell then
Sylvia.

Today I saw
A poster for
Benidorm.

And it reminded
Me of our
Holiday there.

It was very
Hot.
And you got
Burnt.

Flaming red
Raw. Blood.
Flesh sizzling.
Ow.

You said it
Was my fault

But it wasn't.

People get
Burnt.

Especially when
They are in
Love.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

©*The Times*

TOMORROW: 'Quarrel in the Duty Free' — another amazing poem by Britain's greatest-ever poet.

NEW WORDS

with Phillip Howard

SPOUSE
n. Formal use only. Male or female partner who wishes to accompany Minister on agreeable trip abroad. Not to be confused with wife (qv) who is left behind. Eg, "Look here Tony, Gaynor is my spouse because I say so". (Hansard 1998)

CEASEFIRE
n. Ulster term to indicate period of time in which number of people murdered has fallen to only one per day. Eg, "Ceasefire on course — not many dead." (Times Headline 1998)

MISHCON
n. Jewish slang term — conflation of *con* meaning deceive and *mish-mash* meaning a muddle. Eg, "That Anthony Julius has made a right mishcon of Diana's Memorial" (Charity Commissioners Report 1998, page 798, para 171 ii(b))

Those Bonos In Full

Pro Bono Publico
Literal meaning "For the good of the public". Principle under which top lawyers like Anthony Julius do not act.

Sonny Bono
Literal meaning "Son of Bono". Former popular singer in the 1960s, politician and partner of Cher-ie Blair.

Bono
Literal meaning "Man with silly glasses". Popular singer with group U2. Not to be confused with Sonny Bono (see above) who wrote the 1960s hit "I've Got U2 Babe".

Edward de Bonio
Literal meaning "Edward of the Bones". The inventor of the world's first lateral dog biscuit which can be fed sideways into the mouth of a dog. Not to be confused with the Latin expression "Et U2, Bruto", originally used by Anthony Julius Caesar. *(That's enough. Ed.)*

TV Highlights

Heroes of Comedy *(Channel 4)*
9.00pm
TONIGHT "Robin Cook". Friends and colleagues pay tribute to the great comedian and play old clips of some of his funniest moments. The "One leg-over sketch" with partner Gaynor is still wonderful, but sadly his career disintegrated shortly afterwards. "A great loss to comedy," said his undevoted wife Margaret.

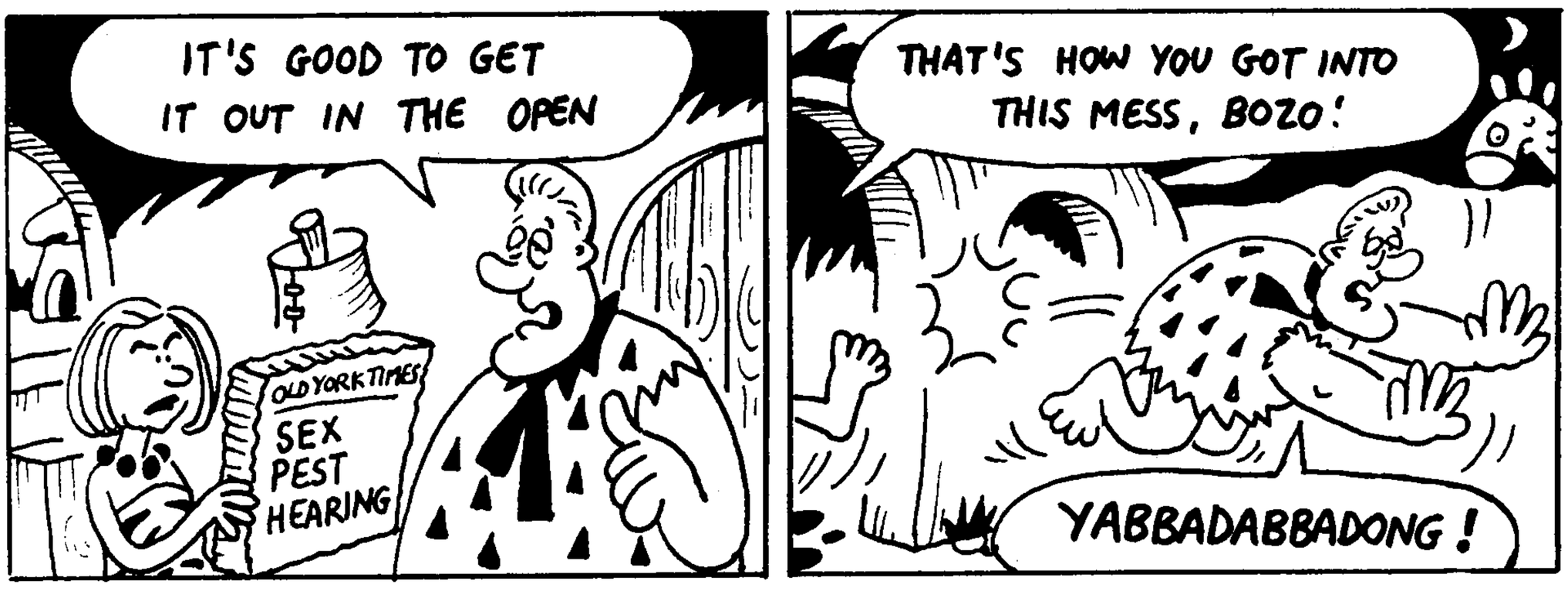
Neighbours From Hell *(BBC1)*
8.30pm
UNBELIEVABLE fly-on-the-wall footage of feuding neighbours Tony and Gordon. Gordon lives at No. 11 and Tony at No. 10 but Gordon isn't satisfied, saying that he should be living in Number Ten and that Tony broke his promise when he gazumped him. Unpleasant exchanges in the newspapers escalate when Tony's friend Alastair tries to beat Gordon up. Gordon's friend Charlie retaliates in kind. Unmissable.

Advertisement

MAN AT I.R.A.

No. 10: The Peacemaker Range
Ideal smart casual wear for the overnight stop-off in London. It all clashes violently but it's not your fault. *(Non-Paisley tie extra.)*

MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Sorry, it's me again! And that's my theme for the week — saying sorry.

When Cherie and I were recently in Japan, on our way back for the Seychelles, we were really touched by their willingness to forgive us for all the horrors that went on in the Second World War!

The message is surely clear. We must forgive them in return, which is why we are going to dedicate a special stall to Japan in our Millennium Tent!

We are going to have all sorts of Japanese things on display, including some of those new virtual reality pets which are such a favourite with the kids!

We're also going to have a bonsai tree, a Yamaha keyboard for our sing-songs and some genuine Japanese Scotch Whisky!

But that's enough from me about the Tent, because I know our Churchwarden Mr Mandelson has got a lot that he wants to tell you about in his bulletin! (No, I haven't. PM)

And while we're on the subject of forgiveness, a special thank you to Dr Mowlam for her week of prison-visiting in Ulster!

My goodness, hasn't she shown us all how even those who have committed the most terrible murders should not have their views ignored!

Didn't someone say in the Bible "blessed are the peace processors, for they shall be called the processors of peace"? *(New Labour Bible, Sermon on the Stormount, Luke 8.11)*

And with so much forgiveness about, what a pity it is that nearer to home some people still have so much bitterness in their hearts just because their husbands

have left them for their secretary.

I don't want to name names, but I think Margaret Cook knows who I am talking about!

As a vicar, it is not my place to judge Robin in a judgemental way. To me he's an indispensable member of our parish team, who has a real flair for tact and diplomacy!

So, come on, Margaret, search deep into your heart for those magic words "I have no further comment on this matter"!

Remember "silence is golden" *(Proverbs, 31.19)*

And before I leave my theme for this week, I would just like to add that I am just as capable of forgiveness as anyone else!

That is why I am very happy to put on record that I have completely forgiven Mr Brown, our treasurer, for putting it around the parish that he covets my job, and that he runs the whole parish anyway!

Of course, he now says that he never says anything of the kind, as he makes clear in the letter below, which he very kindly agreed to sign when I gave it to him.

I'm sorry, but that's all I've got time for this week!

Yours,

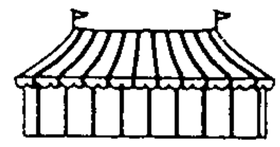
Tony

Millennium Tent Update with Mr Mandelson

I would just like to put on record that the Committee for the Millennium Tent is doing an excellent job in a spirit of unity and goodwill. I am delighted to announce that Mr Stephen Bayley of Bayley Home Interiors in the High Street has resigned from the Committee following my sacking him. His subsequent comment that I run the Committee "like a dictator" was totally uncalled for, and anyone I catch repeating this kind of thing will be sacked as well. People are still writing to me asking "What's going to be in the tent, churchwarden?" My answer is perfectly clear. Stop writing to me at once.

PM

Verses By A Local Poet



The People's Tent

The People's Tent is deepest grEy
And now it's only two years away.
What's inside it, I hear you say.
That's not the point, just shout
hooray!

Prof. E.J. Hobsbawm C.H.,
the St Albion's Home For Distressed Stalinists, Karl Marx Close

You've got to hand it to the vicar!

The Vicar's Evangelical Parish Mission

● The Vicar will be out and about all next week touring the parish, spreading the word about our plans to help the less well-off by cutting back on their charitable handouts from the Church. Catch him at the following venues: the **Work to Welfare Counselling Unit** (formerly the Job Centre); the **Single Mothers' Return To Work Counselling Unit** (formerly Under-3s Creche); **Cool Britannia Arms** (formerly the Britannia Arms).

Hail And Farewell!

A fond goodbye to our good friend Donald Dewar, who is leaving St Albion's to take up a very important new job in Scotland. Donald assures us that his move has nothing whatever to do with the stories recently circulating in the parish about the fact that Mr Lairg ran off with his wife. "That was all a long time ago," Donald tells us, "and I have completely forgiven him." You see, forgiveness is all the rage!

TB

A LETTER FROM MR BROWN

Dear Vicar,

I would just like everyone in the parish to know that you are my greatest friend and there is no one who could do your job better than you do yourself.

I am very happy to serve under me as treasurer and to sign this letter.

Yours faithfully,
Gordon

Nice one, Gordon! TB

★ PARISH APPOINTMENTS ★

To run the Gilbert and Sullivan Society: Mr Southgate, who runs the Dub, Rap 'n' Gabba Techno Vinyl Emporium (Spice Girls R Us), Emi Road.
To run the Art Society: Mr Robinson, the manager of the Smiling Nosher Service Break on the A4119.

We are very lucky to have secured the services of these two prominent local businessmen to run the two most important cultural organisations in the parish. Special thanks to Chris Smith (and Dorian!) for coming up with their names!

That Mo Mowlam Breakthrough Peace Plan In Full

1. New "power-sharing" 78-seat consultative assembly to sit at Stormont on alternate Tuesdays. With responsibility for tourism, the environment and cheese.

2. A grand Council of the Isles with representatives from Scotland, Wales, Jersey, Rockall, Malin, Fastnet, Finistere, Fredastaire and Norway (nul points).

3. New Cross-Border Peacekeeping Force, made up equally of former members of the INLA, the UVF, the UDI, the IRA and the PVC to ensure continuing violence and to promote tourism.

4. A number of Hollywood films to be made every year on location in Ireland and Ulster, starring Bruce Willis, Mickey Rourke or Liam Neeson as lovable ex-terrorists who work tirelessly for peace by shooting each other.

5. Direct rule by British Government.

6. United Ireland at once.

7. Er...

8. That's it.

PARKY'S BACK!

by Our TV Staff **Christina "Lunchtime" O'Done**

IT WAS just like the old days.

From the wings a familiar, grey-haired figure bounced onto the stage to a hail of applause.

The chat-up king was back, ready to entertain the nation and to prove that the young kids had nothing on old Parky.

"Will you give a warm welcome," he said, "to my very good friend — someone who needs no introduction — or rather he does, because no one knows who he is — Bill Hague!"

That was how the veteran Tory chairman launched his come-back, after years in the wilderness.

Said one critic, Sara Keays: "There's no one to match Parky for the quality of his questions. Ranging from 'What are you doing later?' to 'Would you like to be my researcher?', they combine the qualities of

(cont'd p.94)

Tales of Merrie England

The Legend Of Robin Cook And His Merry Women

NOW in the England of those days there was no man more hated than Bad King John, a weak tyrant who held the nation in his thrall.

The only men who dared oppose him were a band of brave outlaws, living in the shadowy depths of Walworth Road.

And none of that band was as red of beard and bright of eye as Robin the Cook.

Robin was more feared by John's men than any other in that brave group of outlaws — yea, more so even than Little John Prescott, Friar Dobson or the beautiful Maid Mandelson.

And he was best known for his long bow and his prowess in the ancient sport of legover.

Wherever he appeared, both young and old would gather round to greet him with this happy song:

Robin Cook, Robin Cook,
With his beard so red.
Robin Cook, Robin Cook,
Getting into bed.
Loved by his secretary, hated by his wife,
Robin Cook, Robin Cook,
Robin Cook...

Indeed, as they roamed the countryside, promising to rob the rich and give to the poor, Robin's fame grew apace.

But at last the day came when weak King John was driven from his home by a terrible landslide.

Then Good King Tony was restored to rule wisely over the good folk of England, and he made Robin the chiefest of his counsellors.

But the people's rejoicing did not last e'en a nine-month.

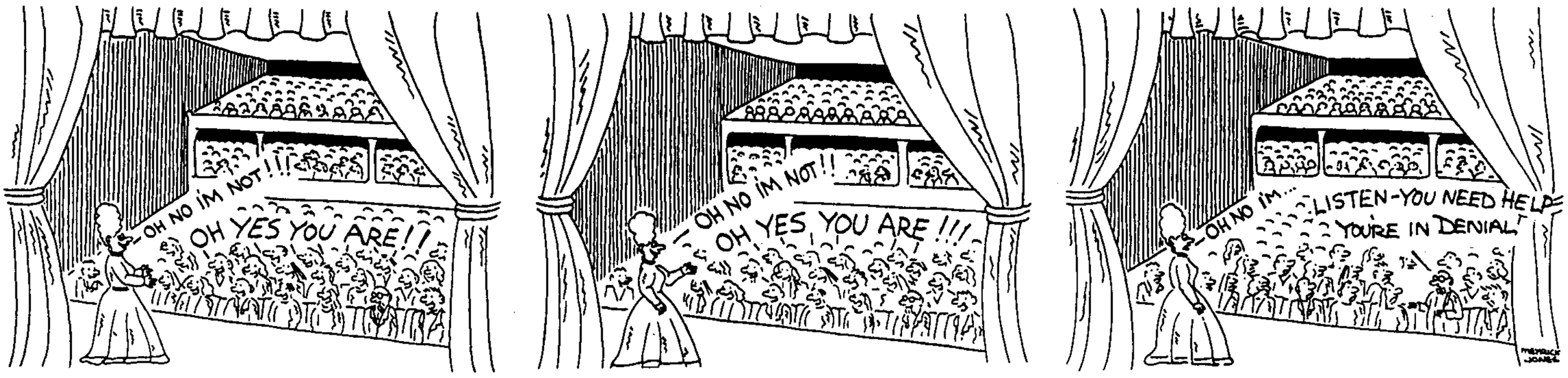
For King Tony's first edict was that his men should go out to rob the poor in order to give to the rich.

And his second edict was that brave Robin should henceforth travel alone on the King's business and not take any of his Merrie Women with him — particularly not Mistress Gaynor.

And the people began sadly to sing a new song:

Robin Cook, Robin Cook,
With his beard so red.
Robin Cook, Robin Cook,
All alone in bed.
Loved by the press, hated by the rest,
Robin Cook, brought to book,
Robin Cook.

NEXT WEEK: King Tony the Lionheart changes his mind and lets Mistress Gaynor travel with Willy Scarlet (surely 'Robin Cook'? Ed.)



SHIRLEY BASSEY'S NEW HIT

Opera News

New Season at Garsington

Il Trionfo di Leonardo

FIRST-ever performance of long-lost Haydn opera about an 18th Century landowner Don Leonardo Ingrami who entertains his rich friends by staging agreeable musical masques and pageants in the exquisite gardens of his country mansion. But the local peasantry, led by the formidable Donna Mobile, are enraged by the harmless noise of aristocratic revelry. In protest they sing the now-famous Strimmers' Chorus, accompanied by the sound of lawn mowers, klaxons and motor horns.

One particularly imaginative villager flies over the stage in one of M. Montgolfier's early hot-air balloons, carrying the legend "Hoot if you hate Haydn". Act Two begins with Don Ingrami being arrested for the crime of "noise pollution" by officers of the South Oxfordshire District Council. He is put on trial and in his defence sings the beautiful aria "Buon giorno magistrato", in which he suggests to the judge that, since he is clearly a very civilised fellow, he might like to bring his wife to a future performance, with front row seats and a champagne supper to follow. The judge sees the strength of Don Ingrami's legal arguments, and orders that the riotous peasantry should be put to death.

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Hot Goss!

IT'S TRUE! Tone has teamed up with his old Rock 'n' Roll mucker Mick Hucknall of the late great Simply Red (now renamed Not Simply Red But Incorporating Quite a Lot of Blue). Together they are going to shake the world of rock to its roots. Tone says: "In the words of the great Paul McLennon, 'We're going to have a revolution, yea-eah'."
And the Mick/Tone sound is going to do for the British Music Business what the Moog synthesiser did for the late great Rick Wakeman — pre "Journey to the Centre of the Road".
Here's what Mick and Tone are going to do to stand Brit Pop 'n' Roll on its head:
● Have a laugh ● Have a few beers ● Develop a new initiative to review existing copyright law and maximise the business potential of the contemporary recording industry.
Sound wild? That'z coz it izz!

Band Noooz

Throbbin' Robin Cook, Blairzone's organ wizard and their very own Love Machine, has been hogging the front pages with his wild groupie sex! But Tone says: "Hey, what the hell! The guy is touring all year, he lives out of hotel rooms and it was only natural that the man they call Mr Sex On Legs should succumb to the pressures of the job. 'Nough said? No?

Tone's All Time Faves by The Simplys

● *Money's Too Tight For Benefits*
● *Holding Back The Pounds*
● *Open Up The Red Box (There's A Laptop Inside)*

Tone's Thought From Japan

In the words of the late great Sir Elton of John, "Sorry seems to be the hardest word" (so I'll tell you what to say, Tojo).

Robin's Horizontal Joggin' Trax

I Will Survive — Gloria Gaynor Regan
Sexual Healing — Marvin Gaynor Regan
Twistin' The Knife Away — Mrs Cook

SO... FAREWELLS

JOHN WELLS is the only person to have had his picture in every single issue of *Private Eye*. He appears on the masthead as the crusader with the bent sword — originally a character called "Little Gnittie" invented by Willie Rushton for the Oxford magazine *Mesopotamia*.

Although one of the Oxford gang who helped to launch the *Eye* in 1961, John became an Eton schoolmaster on leaving University and appeared in the credits using the pseudonym of J. Campbell Murdoch in order to keep his subversive activities a secret from his fellow "beaks". When he left Eton in 1964 he spent two years as a member of the *Eye*'s editorial board, collaborating very closely with Peter Cook. He was a brilliant foil to Cook on most of the *Eye*'s flimsy records, many of which were improvised in the studio. It was Peter who thought of the idea of Mrs Wilson's Diary which began in 1964 and continued — on and off — until Wislon's resignation in 1976. Although John was by then concentrating his activities in TV and the theatre, he remained my collaborator on this feature and later on the even-longer-running *Dear Bill*.

Like husbands and wives, collaborators often fall out because they come to resent their reliance on one another. John and I, however, managed to remain good friends. He was the easiest possible person to work with. He would come into the office with his canvas satchel bulging with scripts, make phone calls to various agents and producers and then we would retire into a cubby hole to "do Denis". It was pure pleasure. John would turn himself into Denis for the duration and in spite of interruptions for gossip it seldom took more than one hour. If I didn't find one of John's jokes funny, I would echo the late Robert Morley who had collaborated with him on a play about a transvestite judge — "Put it in another play, my darling".

He was a very easy-going, good-natured person who took a lot of teasing from fellow *Eye*-men in good heart. When the play of *Mrs Wilson's Diary* was premiered at Joan Littlewood's Theatre Royal in Stratford Tariq Ali rang up John pretending to be Radio Bombay and asking if he would give an interview — the only snag being that, because of the time difference, it would have to be done at 2am. John duly turned up at Broadcasting House — but later told the story against himself.

John did all kinds of things in his hectic career — acting, translating, producing — but I think he was proudest of his

JOHN WELLS

17.11.36 — 11.1.98

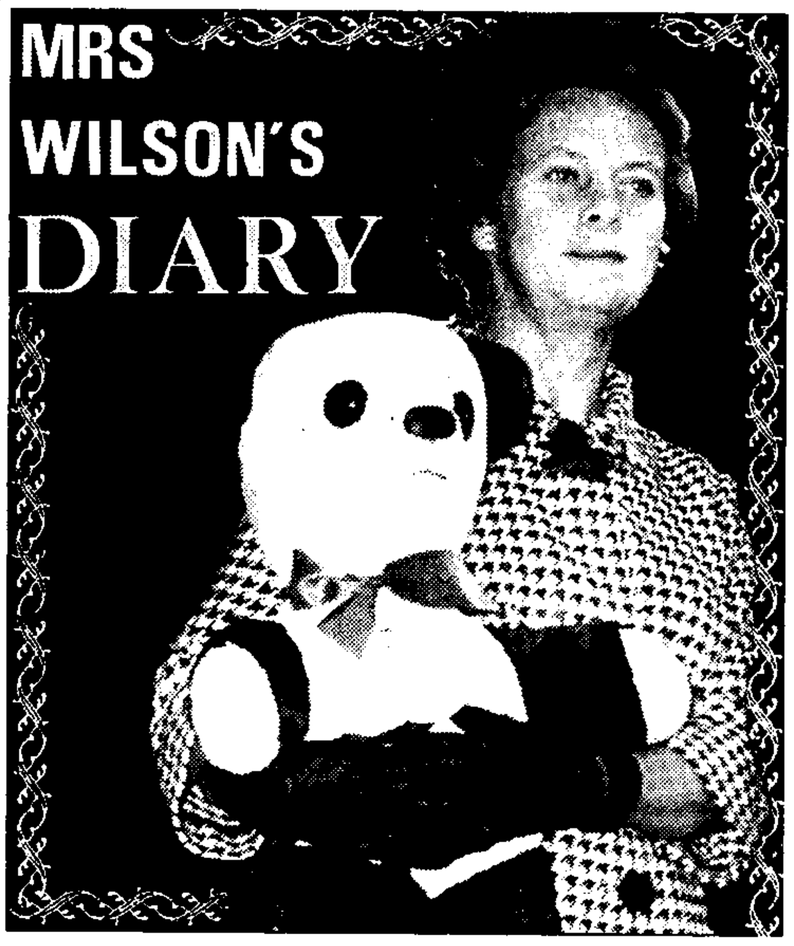
JOHN WELLS was a contributor to the first issue of *Private Eye*, co-editor, with Richard Ingrams, from December 1964 to February 1966, and co-writer (again with Richard Ingrams) of both *Mrs Wilson's Diary* and the *Dear Bill* letters.

involvement with the *Eye* and especially the *Dear Bill* letters. It was a tribute to his insight that on occasion (as I have been told by a senior mandarin) the people at Number Ten became convinced that we were being supplied with inside information by "a mole", so it could be that in years to come the letters will be regarded as an authoritative source on what went on during the Thatcher years.

John faced his final months of illness, during which his hopes were raised so often only to be dashed, with great courage and good humour. He was sustained throughout by his dear wife Teresa and his daughter Dolly *(right)*, who have our deepest sympathy. RIP.

Richard Ingrams

The last *Mrs Wilson's Diary*, 2.4.76



Shall we return to tread again
These ancient marble floors?
Shall we look out through ancient pane
Once we have passed these doors?

"No, no!" the walls reply, "no more,
Shall ye be masters here!
Begone, as all have gone before,
Jim Callaghan's hour draws near!"

And shall we be remembered, then?
And shall we leave our mark?
The walls are dumb at Number Ten
And we are in the dark.

As History turns o'er the leaf
Will WILSON's name be writ
In letters large -— or small and brief?
Perhaps that will be it...

Too soon to tell: posterity
Alone can tot the score
And babes unborn the truth shall see
In 1984.

Like shadows of some troubled dream
We fade as dawn doth break
Time, like an ever-rolling stream
Bears us off in its churning wake.

I must confess that when Harold told me a few short weeks ago of his desire to let fall the reins of office in order to secure an invitation to visit Chairman Mao, I never quite believed him. So you could have knocked me down with a feather when the shattering news came through on the wireless last week as I was ironing the Inspector's woollen reachmedowns prior to his Easter holiday in Corfu.

It all began at breakfast that morning, when Lady Forkender came round to take dictation, as she usually does on a Tuesday. She sat down at the kitchen table, crossing her legs in a sprightly manner, and adjusting the seam of her frock. Harold was in thoughtful mood, twirling the tassel of his dressing gown and puffing at his first pipe of the day. "You know, Marcia," he began, "I have been thinking. Sixty years old. It makes you think. In ten years' time, when I am seventy, I have a good mind to pack it in."

At this, Lady Forkender began to stare at him in an ominous fashion. "Pack it in," she repeated in a husky whisper. "I see. You are going to pack it in." "I thought so, yes," Harold affirmed in casual vein, playfully releasing a six-inch jet of flame from his Gl-style Bazooka Lighter, and not apparently noticing that Lady Forkender's hands had begun to tremble. "And now my letter to Sir Monty Finniston, to tell him he is sacked. 'Dear Monty'..."

Lady Forkender laid her Scriptomatic Kamikaze Felt Pen and spiral notebook down on the breakfast table, her face colouring to a darker tint. "Don't you *ever* think of anybody but yourself?" she enquired in a vibrant contralto. "I'm sorry?" Harold replied innocently. "Oh, it's all right for you to talk about packing it in," the recently-ennobled stenographer resumed, "you've got your pension scheme all worked out: the contract for your memoirs only needs your signature. But what about the rest of us? In ten years' time I shall still be in my prime, still not fully stretched careerwise. Do you think anybody else is going to take me on, after what you've done to me?" "I don't know what you mean," Harold interposed, "pray calm yourself."

But his pleadings were in vain. Uttering a strangled sob, Lady Forkender picked up the Cottage in Wales teapot given us by Lord Shinwell, and raised it above her head. Harold continued to twirl his dressing-gown cord in a nonchalant fashion, glancing up at the brandished effect and observing, "If you throw that at the wall, Marcia, or indeed at myself, I shall ring up Buckingham Palace and resign this instant."

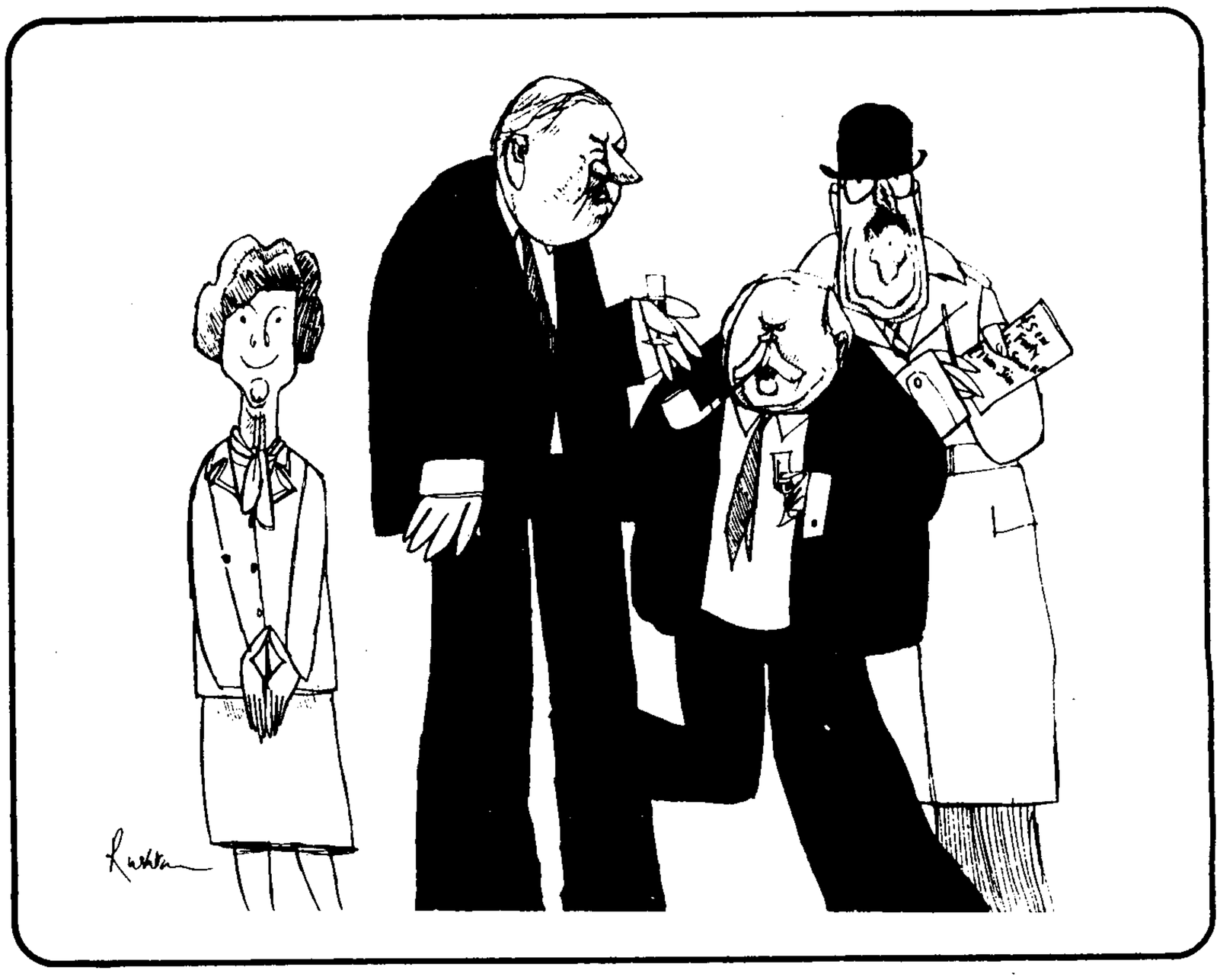
For a moment the amanuensis paused, a play of conflicting emotions passing across her face. Then, as if in the grip of some force she could not control, she hurled the teapot with great violence across the room. It missed Harold, and shattered in a corner, where the deluge of hot tea and fragments of porcelain awoke Paddy in his basket by the Agamatic, causing him to leap up with a yelp and run madly round and round the room.

In the ensuing pandemonium, as the Inspector ministered to Lady Forkender with hot towels and a bottle of Sal Volatile, Harold rose to his feet with the words, "This is it!" and strode purposefully into the den. "I am afraid, Your Ladyship," the Inspector observed, watching his retreating figure, "that that has torn it. It is curtains for all of us. As far as I am concerned, I owe you a debt of gratitude. I have a mind to open a little sweets and tobacco shop over Hackney way."

A few hours after the bombshell hit the world's press, a familiar face appeared at the kitchen window, that of our erstwhile neighbour, Jim Callaghan, accompanied by Audrey with a tape-measure. "Hullo," Jim beamed, as I admitted them to the kitchen. "The Boss suggested we should pop in for a chin-wag." "Indeed I did," cried Harold, appearing in the doorway, a large beaker of Wincargnac cradled in his plump fingers. "Well,

Jim, it is all fixed," he announced expansively, "Gromyko has agreed to fly out to be greeted by you at London airport, in front of a massive array of TV cameras. Kaufmann has written a statesmanlike attack on Ian Smith for you to read out in the House. I have decided to give you your chance before you are too old."

A convivial evening ensued, and when the Callaghans finally left at ten past nine, Harold proposed that we should turn in. Before switching off the Magic Mushroom bedside light, I could not resist expressing my regrets that Harold had decided his mantle should fall on Jim rather than on the suave and urbane Mr Jenkins. "Pah!" Harold countered, with a snort of disdain. "Perhaps the only truly gratifying element in this scenario, Gladys, is that I have settled Smoothie's hash good and proper. Oily Roy! Let him go snivelling back to the gilded drawing rooms of Belgravia. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Let him take what comfort he can in their perfumed saloons. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" And smiling like a child he fell into a deep sleep.



The Thatchers visit the Falkland Islands, 14.1.83

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Dear Bill,

First things first. I wouldn't bother if I were you to go up to town for the Lillywhites sale. I had a quick whizz round en route for the Ritz Bar, and quite frankly, apart from the evil-smelling horde of Arabs hurling athletic supports from hand to hand in the jogging department there didn't seem much of interest to you. I made do with a set of thermal Japanese golf hats in pastel shades, knocked down to practically nothing. Maurice's friend with the funny leg swears by them, and I thought they might enliven the scene at Worplesdon. You'll forgive me for not giving you prior notice of this present little excursion, but we were all sworn to keep absolutely mum, lest the Argies bomb the airstrip prior to our arrival. When it was first mooted, in company with assorted brasshats and other Whitehall buffers all drawing her attention to the various hazards attached, I wrung my hands imploring M. to think again. Pym however seemed singularly sanguine urging her to press on and fulfill her destiny. (I wonder why?)

Needless to say the Boss had her way, but agreed to throw sand in the eyes of the reptiles with talk of a cancellation, and limit the operation to an Ulster-Style "inner and outer". I thought it only right and proper to motor the old girl out to Brize Norton and flutter my hanky from the waving base, telling her as she studied her red boxes in the passenger seat of my deep regrets that I couldn't come along and enjoy all the fun. After she said "But you *are* coming, Denis" for the third time the penny finally dropped and I began to feel very queasy indeed. Not only was I unsuitably accoutred for the Antarctic, but I had several dates lined up on the old While the Cat's away the Mice will play syndrome, and therefore had to ring round from the only available telephone in the Nissen Hut at the drome. All slightly embarrassing. Next thing I know it's up a little ladder into the boneshaker, chocks away, and eyes down for seven hours hard-arse non-stop to Ascension. The worst thing about it, Bill, was that not being forewarned I was deprived even of the solace of my little flask that I always pack for these occasions. I tried to light a gasper, but it was immediately knocked out of my hand by some Air Commodore, roaring above the din of the engines that I must be mad, didn't I realise I was sitting on forty thousand gallons of high octane fuel? You can imagine my mental state when we tottered out at Ascension, a godforsaken spot if ever I saw one, or so I thought until we reached the Falklands. My hopes of a quick dash to the Duty Free

were immediately put paid to as we were frog-marched up another ladder into an even older biplane, and off for another thirteen hours of unmitigated hell, teeth chattering with the vibration, as we nose-dived towards the sea to take on fuel from a stalling nuclear bomber, Margaret unruffled by it all still deep in her boxes and writing her Christmas thank-you letters.

Finally I was awakened from a nightmarish doze and hustled out into the blizzard to be met by that awful little slug Hunt who used to be the Governor, and a small crowd of blue-nosed Sheepshaggers, the surrounding view bringing back unhappy memories of our grisly holidays with Lord Pucefeatures on the Isle of Muck. M. strides in, a dreadful gleam in her eye, and begins to press the flesh, a half-witted photographer from the local roneoed news-sheet *The Shaggers' Weekly* falling about in the background popping off his flashbulbs.

I think we had shaken hands with the entire population of the benighted settlement before the wretched Hunt's better half brightly announced that she had put the kettle on. We were then, if you are still with me, invited to climb into a ridiculous London taxi, and driven off through the minefield to Mon Repos, locally known as Dunshaggin. On arrival we are greeted by a smouldering peat fire, tea and rock buns arranged on tasteful doilies, whereupon Hunt, catching the light of insanity in my eye, mutters that if I were to accompany him upstairs, he has something that might interest me. This proved to be a captured pair of underpants once belonging to General Menendez, now mounted by his good lady in a pokerwork frame.

Controlling my emotions, I suggested a stroll to stretch the legs after our long ordeal. Resisting the fool Hunt's suggestion of a trek up Mount Tumbledown, I reached the Goose six minutes later, only to find the bar crammed with inebriate reptiles, brasshats, airline stewards and one or two cross-eyed Sheepshaggers of idiotic mien sitting in a corner reminiscing gloomily about the good old days under the Argies when at least they could get a drink. As I write our time of departure is still very much under wraps, Margaret having toddled off to a small thanksgiving service at the local tin tabernacle and showing every desire to stay on indefinitely. At least, thanks to Mine Host, Bill Voletrouser, I am now well prepared for the return trip, a miniature in every pocket and a fire extinguisher full of the amber fluid for discreet in-flight refuelling.

Yours in transit,

D Cam

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

Han-z-z-zard

3.00 Prime Minister's Question Time

Ms Patsy Jacket *(Tunbridge Wells, New Lab)*: Would the Prime Minister agree that our party is very keen on single mothers and will do everything it can to create more of them, which is exactly what my Rt Honourable friend the Foreign Secretary has done by so bravely leaving his wife?

Mr Tony Blair *(Sedgemore, New Lab)*: Thank you for asking that, Patsy. You read it out very well. I'll give you another question next week. *(Labour cheers, cries of "Give us a job!")*

Mr John Madcow *(Sleazegone, New Con)*: May I say how very nice it is to see the Prime Minister back in the House for a change?

Mr Tony Blair: Look, I didn't come all this way from Japan just to be patronised by a member of the party opposite which made such an appalling mess of this country over the last 18 years. But now, thanks to the policies we've inherited, we have the strongest economy in Europe. I hope that will help the honourable member to keep his cakehole firmly closed in future. *(Labour cheers, cries of "Good old Tony!")*

Mr William Squitt *(Woebegone, New Con)*: Would the Prime Minister like to tell the House whether the taxpayers of this country are expected to pay for his Rt Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary's new bit of fluff to traipse around the world with him?

Tony Blair: I refer the Rt Hon member to the holiday I took a few moments ago.

Mr Paddy Ashtray *(Pantsdown, Old Lib Dem)*: Can I ask my honourable friend the Prime Minister whether he remembers who I am?

(MPs leave chamber en masse for important briefing sessions with their researchers)

New Labour, New Marriage

Gaynor Regan **Robin Cook**

How They Are Related

Cock Robin
|
Sir Robin de Cockerley
|
Sir Robin Butler
|
Robin Redbeard
|
Peter Farter-Cook
|
D.H. Lawrence
|
Alistair Cook
|
Roger Cook

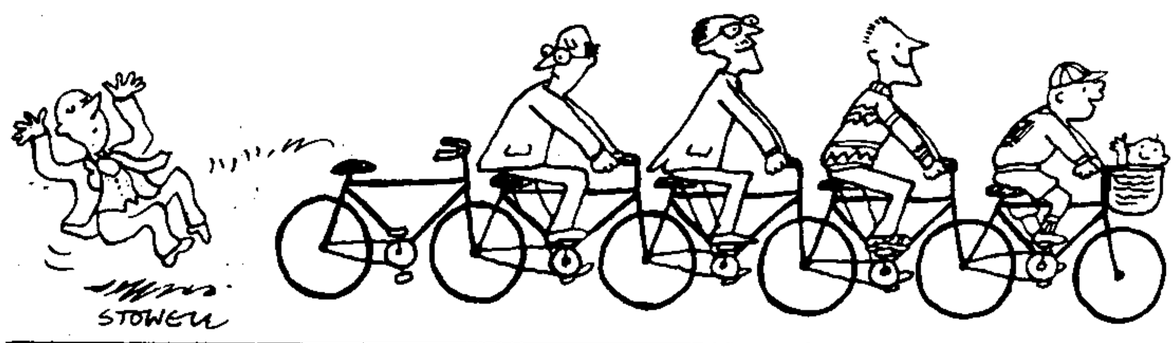
King Leer
|
Regan
|
Ronald Reagan
|
Donald Regan
|
Donald Duck
|
Inspector Regan of the Sweeney
|
Rockfist Rogan
|
Gay Search

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath**

29. The Crashing Bore Diet

"... it really works I've already lost five ounces in only a month if you crash diet you only put it all back on again the thing to do is to change one's lifetime eating habits for instance I used to have a Twix & Mars bar for elevenses & you mustn't mix them now I can have as many Twixes as I like OR Mars Bars but not both & I never mix carbohydrates with protein so whereas I used to have egg & bacon & toast for breakfast I now can have egg without the bacon or vice versa without the toast it's just as nice & in the evening instead of half a bottle of whiskey I can eat as much spinach as I like it's fasincating apparently the thing to avoid is polyunsaturated fatty saturated acids unless you combine them with pineapple in which case it breaks down the enzymes & the weight falls off you I've got a video you can borrow it if you like can I have a piece of that choccy cake I think I'm allowed as long as I don't have full fat cream I've never felt healthier except for the constipation and the fact that my skin's come out in a nasty rash I expect it's my body ridding itself of all the nasty poisons I used to eat I'll have a large gin please but NO tonic mustn't mix alcohol with water..."

LIFE CYCLE



TEACHERS STUNNED BY BLUNKETT'S SHOCK PLAN

by Our Schools Staff **Lunchtime O'Level**

THE WORLD of education reacted in disbelief last night at the revolutionary plan put forward by Mr David Blunkett to raise standards in Britain's primary schools.

Teaching unions went on strike, school governors resigned en masse and local education authorities threatened to shut down thousands of school when Mr Blunkett unveiled his dramatic 3-point blueprint:

1. Pupils should be taught to read.

2. Pupils should be taught to write.

3. Pupils should be taught how to count up to 10.

The Daily Telegraph

The Step-By-Step Guide To Getting Your Duvet Story Inside The Covers Of Every Newspaper

1. Take your duvet story firmly in one hand and hold it in front of Features Editor.

2. Watch the grateful Features Editor struggle to change the flufty duvet story into real material.

3. Er... that's it. Amazing. The paper is put to bed and the reader is asleep!

TOMORROW: How to put on your trousers the easy way.

THE XANADULY TELEGRAPH

OPPOSITION TO PLEASURE DOME MOUNTS

by Nicholas Taylor Coleridge

Public opinion is hardening against plans by Kubla Khandelson to build an ancient pleasure dome on a site in Xanadu.

"The project is a fiasco," say critics. "Khandelson is a dictator who expects everyone to do whatever he decrees. The twice--five--mile--round, wall--and--tower--girdled site near the River Alph is very difficult for people to visit — and moreover there are no ideas as to how to fill up the caverns measureless to man."

Kubla Khandelson denied this, saying that he had just returned from a trip to Opium World where *(not continued due to Mr Coleridge's failure to complete this report)*

Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD

DOCTORAL FOOTWEAR: A SELECTION

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

PEOPLE MAKE FUN OF US FOR BEING STUPID.... BUT WE'RE THE ONES WHO SET THE TRENDS!
THAT'S TRUE. EVERYBODY COPIES US!
I MEAN JUST LOOK AT ALL THESE FOOD SCARES!
THAT'S RIGHT..... WE WERE THE FIRST PEOPLE TO BE SCARED OF FOOD.

Everyday UPS moves over 12 packages and documents in over 200 countries worldwide.

UPS advertisement, The Informer

Villagers who know the Home Secretary and son William – arrested for allegedly selling cannabis – say the Straw family is well liked and has laid down roots in the local community.

David Lewis, who runs the Spar store, Brize Norton Road, said: "Jack is the vice president of the cricket club and William has been down to score for us.

Oxford Mail

THE RISING SUN

Jap Premier's Shock Apology To All Sun Readers

Original Japanese text – read sideways

Dear Sun Readers:

On behalf of the people of Japan, I would like to say that I am very sorry for everything that happened in the Second World War, particularly for Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Bridge Over The River Kwai.

But hopefully all that is now in the past and the Japanese people can now show their deep contrition by buying up your famous Millennium Dome.

Yours sincerely,

MR TAMAGOTCHI, Prime Minister of Japan

(as dictated by Alistair Campbell)

ON OTHER PAGES

- **Kwai Oh Kwai Are They Allowed To Come Over Here Buying Up Our British Dome?** ***asks Paul Littlejohnson*** 2
- **Tit and Bumpers — The Toyota Babe Bares All** . . 3
- **How You Can Bonk 24 Times A Night After Eating A Raw Fish Dinner** ***writes Dr Thomas Stuttaford*** 4

NOT ON OTHER PAGES

- **Murdoch Apologises to Britain for Sun**

'NO ROOM FOR CONRAN IN HEAVEN,' says God

by Our Millennium Staff **Sara Fim and Cherry Bim**

THE Celestial City was rocked to its foundations today by reports that there would be no room in the "Dome of Heaven" for Sir Terence Conran, the distinguished designer of sofas.

Sources close to God were alleged to have told the world's media that "the Almighty considers it inappropriate to allow in a devout atheist, just because Mr Blair goes to his restaurant".

But in a clarification statement issued later by spin angels, a heavenly spokesman said: "The Almighty has been misquoted, as so often before.

Sofa No Good

"Heaven is a multi-faith society with room for all shades of belief or none.

"We up here will certainly recognise the part played by Sir Terence in supplying stripped pine duvets for young couples in the Seventies."

The Son of God is roughly 2000.

THOSE CHRISTIAN DOME EXPERIENCES IN FULL

What you will see in the year 2000

1. Puppet show of complete Old Testament with Sooty as Moses, Sweep as Solomon, and Basil Brush as the prophet Ezekiel (Boom! Boom!) *(10am Stall 194)*

2. The Last Supper On Ice — Torvill and Dean recreate the final Passover Meal with music by Chris de Burgh. *(11.30am The Mandelson Hall)*

3. The Virtual Book of Revelations — state-of-the-art laser video game where *you* are the Beast, the Antichrist bringing darkness to the world. *(Stall No 666)*

4. The Feeding of the Five Thousand Snack Bar. Try our Filet-o-Fish with a sesame seed bap! It's divine! *(All main thoroughfares)*

5. Pontius Pilate Go Kart Ride — details to be announced.

(That's enough christianity. Ed.)

3.30pm	**CHORAL EVENSONG (BCP)**
Introit:	Hosannah to the Son of David *Weelkes*
Responses:	*Leighton*
Psalm:	80
Canticles:	*Blair in B minor*
Anthem:	I waited for the Lord *Mendelssohn*

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Serial flasher gets off with stiff warning

Walthamstow News

Celeb

LIGGER

I MADE THE SAME NEW YEAR RESOLUTION THIS YEAR AS I ALWAYS DO... TO STOP THROWING TANTRUMS AND FITS OF TEMPER AT THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION...
AND HOW LONG DID THIS YEAR'S RESOLUTION LAST.?
THE SAME AS EVERY YEAR I'M AFRAID.
NOT VERY LONG THEN?
NAH. ABOUT FOUR SECONDS.
YEAH. I SAW THERE WAS NOTHING FOR YOU IN THE NEW YEAR'S HONOURS YET AGAIN.
WHAT IS IT WITH THOSE BASTARDS..? IT MAKES ME SO ANGRY!!

DIARY

JULIE BURCHILL

It was the birth of the decade. Mine, I mean. I was born a brash beautiful babe, bawling and bouncy and bursting with bollocks in a big Bristol bospital. The angels sang their carols in their pukey middle-class choruses, there was a star overhead, and I was visited in my crib by poncey wise men bearing gifts. I took one look at them and thought, "Those toffee-nosed tossers make me want to throw up" and with one majestic flick of my forefinger I let them know what they could do with their wanky little gifts. Just one day old, and already I was slap bang at the dead-frigging-centre of the universe.

Born a proud member of the working-class, I had no time for manky, moany, middle-class mores. School was pukesville. So I got a job on the New Musical Express. Talk about pukesville. So I married my first husband. What a tosser. So I became the highest-paid columnist in Fleet Street. Up your arse. So I married my second husband. Bor*ring*. I hate all these wanky mediocre middle-class pursuits just like I hate the middle-classes. They're so bloody *fidgety* and full of *self-pity*.

Within seconds, I was Queen of the Groucho Club. Every night, the rest of Soho would empty as I held court to my helpers and underlings.

"Tell us what you think of Mikhail Gorbachev, Julie!" one my little helpers would say.

"Oh yes, Julie, *please* tell us what you think of Mikhail Gorbachev, oh *pleeease*!"

"Fucking middle-class toss-pot," I would announce. "Bourgeois bloody baldy with a bog-standard birthmark on his bonce. Next!"

"We'd so love to hear your views on European Monetary Union, Julie!"

"Oh yes, *please* Julie, *pleeease* give us your theory on European Monetary Union!"

"European Moronery Union, more like," I would say, and my serfs would all gurgle with the pleasure of it all, filling their little notebooks with my sumptuous smorgasbord of startling sayings.

They would sit around me, my praetorian protectors, keeping me for themselves, cosseting me, guarding me because they didn't want anyone else to have me, Julie Burchill for I, I Julie Burchill, I myself was me and me alone, and what I knew was that I would always be me myself, whatever those up-their-own-arse self-obsessed solipsistic wankeramas sniffing their own armpits in the rest of the Groucho might mumble.

One day, Alexander Solzenhitsyn walked into the Groucho. "It's that fucking beardie with the long face who slags off Stalin," I hissed to Toby Young.

"I'll bloody get 'im for yer, Julie!" said Will Self. "No one disses on your heroes and gets way wiv it. Lemme at 'im!"

"Biff him in the archipelagoolies, boys," I commanded them, "That'll bloody learn him to piss on Uncle Joe's hospitality."

But at that moment Charlotte R walked in. Suddenly, nothing else mattered. She plunged deep into the slipstream of my subconscious, and surfaced smiling, sleek with significance, supremely sauteed in a smorgasbord of sorcerous sensuality, shimmering with skintight savoir-faire, solemn as a scratchcard, spontaneous as soup, shadowy as the sun, saucy as semolina, scanty yet still sincerely and scandalously scintillating, with the shaming sense of sanctity of a shepherdess from Shropshire, or a saxophone — sexophone — played by Schopenhauer.

Charlotte and I being mega-girls, and this being mega-love, we slammed the front door of our hutch and went at it like rabbits, thumping the ground, twitching our noses and gnawing on raw carrots. Not since Russia dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and Wham! broke up had the world seen anything like it. Suddenly, we were the most famous same-sex couple called Julie and Charlotte anywhere in the world. Regardless of our feelings, we would find ourselves ruthlessly splashed all over the bottom quarter of the middle-to-back pages in the early editions, providing we gave them reasonable notice and showed a bit of leg.

My theory is that what the Seventies were to the Sixties, the Eighties were to the Nineties. Just as the Sixties were to the Nineties what the Seventies were to the Eighties. And from where I'm sitting in the Nineties, the Sixties was basically the Eighties, or an Eighties version of the Fifties, but with the Seventies coming in the middle. The Sixties was all bang-bang-Kennedy's-dead-boo-bloody-hoo-well-at-least-we-still-got-Keith-Richards and up until 1977 the Seventies was all Watergate-plus-Osmonds-and-Lava-Lamps-equals-Boresville, but then I came along waving my pen like Neptune's magic sceptre, and the rest of the Seventies was the Burchill Decade, just like the Eighties was the Burchill Decade with a bit of Madonna and Thatcher thrown in and the Nineties was the Burchill Decade, with my main rival Princess Di never managing to stick her foot through my door. But I'll tell you the worst thing about the Nineties. All those poxy little self-inflating columnists only ever writing about their own inky-stinky dinky little lives. Pu-*keeeey*.

NEWSDESK

Adam Jankiewicz: (01635) 30838

Becki Dixon: (01635) 30828

Newbury & Thatcham Chronicle

Former Westminster city council leader Dame Shirley Porter and the four other members who make up the 'Westminster six'

Public Finance

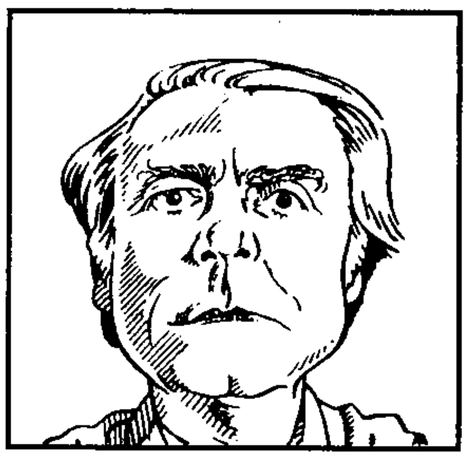
Literary Review

Over long, over ambitious and over there

Underworld
Don Le Lillo
(Picador, £18)

ANTHONY Burgess once remarked that the massiveness of the American sandwich — a snack turned into a near-banquet — was a symbol of the nation's inability to accept the idea of minimalism. *Underworld* by Don De Lillo — the most hyped serious novel in publishing history — perfectly justifies this complaint. The first 60 pages are brilliantly sufficient, but the author is desperate to go for the full-length hero.

De Lillo had published 10 novels before this one to loud broadsheet reviews but quiet bookshop sales. The peak of his career was *Libra*, a deeply researched and dazzlingly reimagined life of Lee Harvey Oswald. In 1992, De Lillo published a novella in *Harper's* magazine, set at a famous Giants/Dodgers baseball match in 1951. It was grand stuff, although non-Americans were likely to have trouble with sentences like: "Pafko goes to the wall to play the carom."



Unfortunately the ecstatic reaction to this small masterpiece persuaded De Lillo, with the giganticism typical of the country's culture, to make an assault on the Great American Novel. Six years on, the exquisite novella turns up as the start of an 827-page novel.

In a series of often unrelated sections — travelling backwards in time from the 1990s to the 1950s — the author follows a set of hazily-sketched characters who are mainly involved in the waste disposal business. They are also obsessive conspiracy theorists who say slick but bewildering things like: "Underwear. Suddenly, everything is underwear. Tell me what it means."

The problem with this is that — while the length of the novel and its publicity campaign both give the impression that the book encapsulates and analyses modern America — De Lillo's main theme is finally peripheral to the nation's history.

Ask a historian to select the guiding motivation of contemporary America and they would say — what? Greed, perhaps. Aggression. God. Any of these, perhaps. But not — surely — paranoia. It's true that you can draw a line of governmental paranoia through McCarthyism to Watergate to Reagan's first term. De Lillo's thesis, though, is that the Cold War has left everyday Americans in a state of permanent quivering suspicion. Yet everything from its churches to its food to its entertainment to its presidents suggests that the defining characteristic of the majority of the nation's citizens remains credulousness.

Every major character in *Underworld* is a conspiracy nut. About 200 pages in, a nun called Sister Edgar walks on to the page. The reader gratefully expects relief from the theorists of the weird who have so far peopled the story. Perhaps, through this protagonist, the writer will grapple with America's high-profile piety.

Forget about it, buddy. Sister Edgar inevitably turns out to be a disciple of the hidden history: "She knew that Bobby Fischer had all the fillings removed from his teeth when he played Boris Spassky in 1972 — it made perfect sense to her — so the KGB could not control him through broadcasts made into the amalgam units packed in his molars." At this point, the reader realises that De Lillo is generalising disastrously from his own temperament.

You don't want to sound like a conspiracy theorist but there's something frightening about the way in which critics have simply bought the hype from publishers who have paid way over the odds for a minority novelist. Almost all reviewers seemed happy to give the impression that this is De Lillo's most accessible novel. In fact, it's among his least. There's no coherent narrative and the glancing references assume a shared culture.

What's been most depressing, though, has been the cultural cringe of the Brit Lit set. Blake Morrison moaned that you couldn't possibly imagine an English novel on this scale: it would have to begin at a cricket match "with all that entailed for tone and range".

Linda Grant — also asserting that Size Does Matter — lamented that "the Americans have *Underworld*. We have A.L. Kennedy". But is the regional short story really the most representative form of British literature? You could equally write: "We have Martin Amis and Louis de Bernières. They have Raymond Carver."

This novel could only work in America, they all moan. But it hasn't worked in America. Frankly, it wouldn't be a disaster if one of the British boys did start a book with a detailed account of Middlesex v. Warwickshire in 1953. At least the resulting book wouldn't be guilty of the apocalyptic over-ambition of *Underworld*. A book purporting to describe a national obsession has fallen victim to one: the chase for the Great American Novel.

Fugitive Poses

by Anne Taking-The-Michaels
(Winner of the Orange Prize and the Guardian Fiction Prize)

I WAS transfixed by the way time buckled, met itself in pleats and folds; I stared at a picture in a book of a safety pin from the Bronze Age — a simple design that hadn't changed in thousands of years. I stared at fossil plants called crinoids that looked like the night sky etched on rock. Then a voice rang out in my head.

"You!" it said. "Who are you?"

"Me?" I asked, rather taken aback.

"Yes, you."

"I am Jakob Beer," I replied, in my politest voice, "a seven-year-old Jewish refugee, fleeing the Nazis and hiding out on a remote Greek island under the tutelage of scientist and humanist Athos Roussos."

"Bollocks."

"Pardon me?"

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

"Bollocks."

"What you trying to say?" I demanded testily.

"You're not a seven-year-old boy."

"Yes, I am."

"What's all that buckling time and Bronze Age pins that haven't changed for thousands of years, then?"

"Err... I'm a bit advanced, that's all. And I happen to have read a book about Bronze Age design last week."

"See?"

"What?"

"You're clearly not a seven-year-old boy. You're not even making any effort to be a seven-year-old boy. In fact, you're the most preposterously unconvincing narrator I have come across since Dan Dare."

"Dan Dare? I don't think I'm familiar with him. I can't recall him from Homer, Strabo or Pliny. My library is rather restricted out here on Zakynthos, you see, despite the fact that this was the island birthplace of no less than three beloved poets — Foscolo, Kalvos and Solomos."

"You're doing it again! Look — it's obvious who you are."

"I'm Jakob Beer. I already told you."

"No, you're not. You're Anne Michaels. You're a middle-aged Canadian woman who's won lots of poetry prizes. It's so obvious it hurts." (*Cont for 94 pages*)

©*Fugitive Pieces*

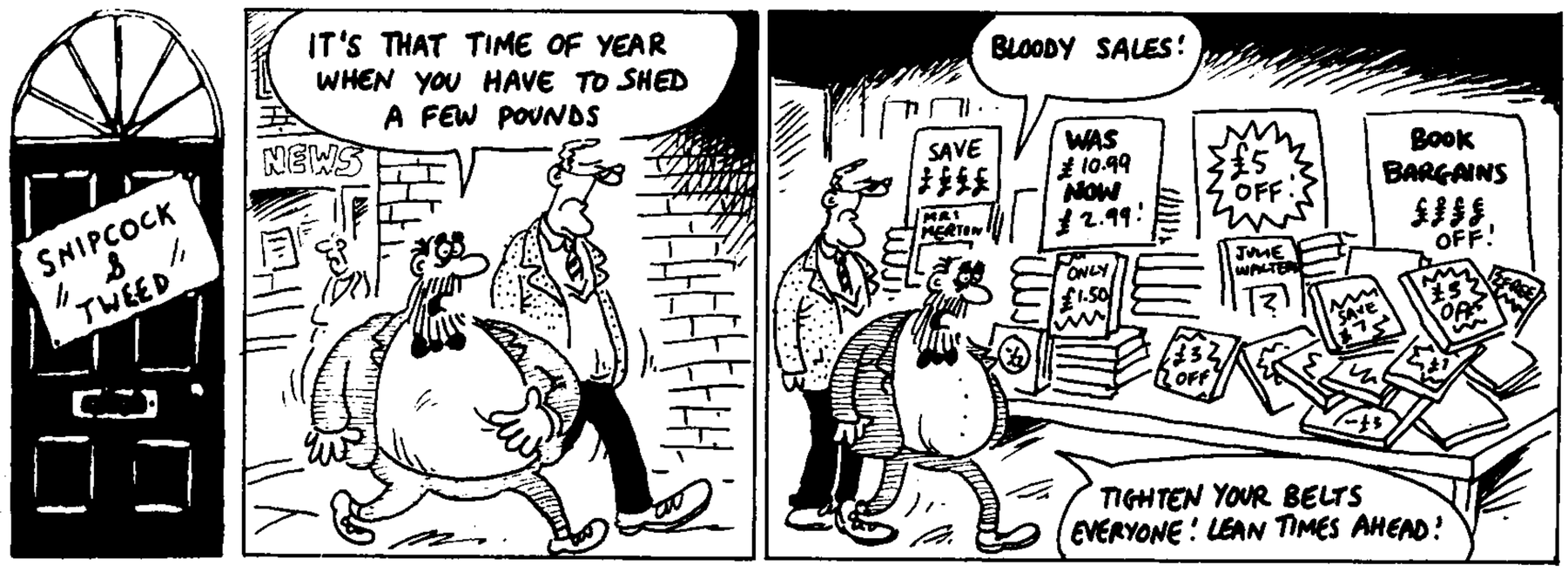
BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *PUBLISHERS, bless them, are hopelessly at sea when they try to tap into popular culture. For every Young Ones book or Mr Bean's Diary, there are dozens of flops. Two houses enjoyed extra large turkeys this Christmas.*

Ebury thought it had the Christmas number one when it paid a six-figure sum for Spiceworld, the tie-in to the Spice Girls' movie. The fab five may have quietened talk of their decline by recording the number one Christmas single, but they can no longer sell everything they touch: the book has been nowhere near the bestseller lists.

Hodder paid a six-figure sum for Mrs Merton's World of Television by Caroline Aherne, and spent a further £50,000 promoting the book. She's a hit on TV, but did anyone want to buy her book? No.

'Bookworm'



footnotes

THE CAMS SCAM

FOR the first time in its history the National Audit Office (NAO) is refusing to reveal a scandalous waste of public money because civil servants won't agree with its conclusions.

A year ago (*Eye* 916) the NAO completed a highly critical report about the astonishing waste of National Health Service money on the "Read codes". These codes were dreamt up ten years ago as a dynamic new method of storing clinical information on hospital computers by Dr James Read, a former GP at Loughborough.

DR. READ

The boffins who run the NHS were tremendously impressed with Read. They paid him £1.25m for his codes (£615,000 of which went straight into his pocket). They set up an entirely new department of the NHS — the Centre for Coding and Classification — installed it in glamorous offices at Loughborough, appointed its director (Dr James Read), paid him a hefty salary and continued to finance the centre at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £1m a year.

Across the road from the centre Dr Read set up his own private company, Computer Aided Medical Systems (CAMS). The main shareholder was James Read and the general manager was his brother, Robert Read. The NHS gave CAMS an exclusive licence to market the codes which were developed by the NHS-financed centre across the road. By 1995, CAMS had taken more than £7m in fees from the NHS and made more than £1m profit.

Everything was going wonderfully for the Read family, but not so well for the NHS. The Read codes were a bit of a flop. Continued parliamentary pressure, mainly from Rhodri Morgan, Labour MP for Cardiff West, led to Read's removal as chairman of the NHS centre, though he went on working there and the vast public subsidies continued. Objections were met by government assurances that "Version 3" of the codes, which were being tested in 25 hospitals, would be of lasting value to the NHS.

Whoops! Health minister Alan Milburn now reveals to Rhodri Morgan (12 Jan) that Version 3 of the codes has been completely abandoned in 10 of the 22 hospitals in which it was tested. The *Eye* understands that the codes are being fully used in only five hospitals. Yet the huge taxpayers' subsidies for the Loughborough white elephant must continue until 1999 when the ludicrous contract comes to an end.

The NAO for a change uses some quite strong language about yet another NHS computer disaster. The NHS executives won't agree the language. Both sides are sulking, and the report stays secret.

OFFICIOUS SOLICITOR

■ STUNG by complaints about his officers' acts as trustees for 40,000 bus pensioners, the official solicitor Peter Harris has issued "some explanations".

Most complaints are about Frank Wheeler, the former Blackpool busman, who fought alone for 10 years to retrieve £200m of bus pensioners' money which he said had been stolen by the government after bus privatisation in 1986.

In 1996 the pensions ombudsman upheld Mr Wheeler's argument and instructed him to get the money back for the pensioners from the trustees of the former National Bus pension fund. Outraged by the ombudsman's decision, the government refused to hand the money over. Instead trustees were appointed from the official solicitor's office, which is funded by the government. The government promised to pay the new trustees the costs of suing the government for the money. Thus the taxpayer is paying the (fantastic) costs of both sides in an action to retrieve money which the ombudsman has already decreed the government must pay.

Official solicitor Harris obdurately refuses to appoint a bus pensioner as a trustee. An obvious candidate for trustee would be Frank Wheeler, who knows all about the issue and would ably represent the interests of his fellow pensioners. Harris and his colleagues won't appoint him. Why?

Harris explains in his document that Mr Wheeler is "over 70 and lives in Scotland". Worse, he has "persistent qualities". Worse still, "he has so far not been convinced about the independence of the official solicitor". As a result, the trustees, all appointed by the official solicitor, "have formed the opinion that Mr Wheeler's inclusion as a director would be likely to result in difficulties in reaching consensus on day to day decisions on the tactics of the litigation". Mr Wheeler, in short, might dare to disagree with the same sort of lawyers and professional pensions experts who opposed his campaign to retrieve the money in the first place.

POLICE 5

PARKINSON'S LAW

■ MRS Gail Homer, of Thaxted, Essex, was driving home after an evening's bridge when she stopped at a T-Junction. A Golf GTI lurching down the main road drove slap into her.

Shocked and trapped, she was released by two electricity workers on their way home. The driver of the Golf was standing, swaying, in the road. One of the workers reported to Mrs Homer: "He's a police officer and he's completely pissed."

The man drove away. There wasn't much difficulty in tracking him down, though — especially as the Golf turned out to be an unmarked police car. Its driver was Det Sgt John Parkinson, 39, of the South East regional crime squad.

Many hours later he rang in to say he was "on a job in London". His colleagues ordered him back to be breathalysed, but he did not appear there until much later that morning. Before long the sergeant was charged with a string of offences, including conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and taking a police car without permission.

Mr Parkinson resigned from the force, and the last two charges were dropped. He came up in front of the stipendiary magistrate at Harlow on 17 November charged with dangerous driving (to which he eventually pleaded guilty), leaving the scene of an accident, not reporting an accident and obstructing police in the course of their duty. After a three-day trial, he was found guilty on all counts, sent to prison for two months, fined £500 and banned from driving for two years.

Bail was refused, and for an awful moment it looked as if a former regional crime squad officer might spend Christmas in prison. But the courts intervened in a touching display of Yuletide mercy. A judge granted Parkinson bail pending an appeal, which was postponed until after Christmas. At the appeal at Chelmsford crown court on 10 January, Judge Benjamin Pearson cut the prison sentence to 100 hours community service, the fine to £250 and the two year ban to one year.

Mrs Homer tells the *Eye* she doubts whether the same sort of mercy would have been shown to anyone who had not served time in the regional crime squad.

Good heavens, Mr Evans

"LET nobody be in any doubt at all that there is no price we would not be prepared to pay to right a wrong." Thus did John Evans, chief constable of Devon and Cornwall, reassure a press conference on 16 April 1995 about the disturbing case of Brian Parsons.

BRIAN PARSONS

A series of local television programmes, and Channel Four's *Trial and Error*, cast doubt on Mr Parsons's conviction in 1988 of the battering to death of 84-year-old Ivy Batten.

Parsons, who had no convictions, came to the attention of police when he volunteered as a witness. The only substantial evidence against him was some dubious forensics about fibres in his car and coat pocket. Since his imprisonment, two criminals, independent of one another, have made statements incriminating a gang of burglars in the murder.

But the Devon and Cornwall police refused to call in an outside police force to investigate the case — the normal practice where serious doubts arise. And the home office made it clear that the case would not be reopened.

In the spring of last year, however, it went to the criminal cases review commission, which ordered a forensic engineer's report. This put the time of Ivy Batten's death much later than previously claimed — and at a time Brian Parsons had a cast-iron alibi. Last month the commission set up a fresh inquiry (under Hampshire police) of precisely the type Mr Evans refused to set up two years ago. Study carefully the chief constable's comment on 10 December about the new inquiry: "The only reason that I have in the past declined to bring in another force is the enormous cost." Now compare it with his 1995 quote above.

TORTURE CASE RE-OPENED

■ THE case of Keith Twitchell, who claims he spent 14 years in prison for a robbery he didn't commit — and to which he was forced to confess after being tortured by West Midlands police officers (see *Eye* 935) — has been referred to the court of appeal by the criminal cases review commission.

ESSEX MAN: Alan Cherry

CHERRY RIPE

THE sale on Christmas Eve of Chelmsford City football stadium to property developers has reminded loyal *Eye* readers of the sad story of the fall of Brentwood Town FC in these pages 28 years ago (*Eye* 232, 3 July 1970).

In 1965 the club was handed over by its patrons to a company controlled by two of the most influential businessmen in town, John Bairstow, an estate agent, and his brother-in-law Alan Cherry. Another director was the former Tottenham and England striker, Jimmy Greaves.

Almost at once the new owners applied for, and eventually secured, planning permission to build houses on the club's football ground, the Hive, after promising the fans an imminent move to a new super stadium elsewhere in the town. The new stadium never materialised. Instead, the club's directors bought up the football stadium in neighbouring Chelmsford and announced that Brentwood Town and Chelmsford City would be merged.

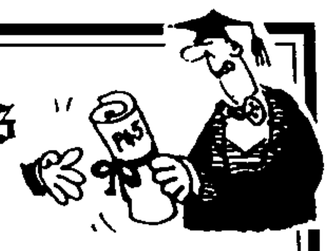
This merger, however, was rejected by the Football Association. The Hive at Brentwood was sold off in May 1970 to a thrusting new property company called Countryside Properties (Southern), whose managing director was Mr Alan Cherry. Houses were built on the ground and successfully sold.

Mr Cherry and Mr Bairstow complained. On 11 January 1971, the *Eye* published a handsome apology, as follows: "It has been pointed out to us that the article might have been read as suggesting that John Bairstow and Alan Cherry needlessly wound up the Brentwood Town Football Club for the purpose of private gain. No such suggestion was ever intended and would of course have been totally unfounded."

Time rolled on, and football continued at Chelmsford's stadium. But not for long. As the *Essex Chronicle* reported on 9 January this year: "What transpired were years of internal wranglings behind the scenes with high court cases, public protest meetings, innumerable financial crises, threats of closures as directors came and went with the club stumbling from one catastrophe to another." The ground became derelict and the club went into receivership.

Now at last the stadium has been bought for £1.2m – by Countryside Properties, whose chief is still the former director of Brentwood Town and Chelmsford City football club, Alan Cherry. Anything, even housing development, will be possible there now — but probably not football.

High Principals



MBA — *MY BOY'S ALRIGHT*

■ A STRANGE reluctance to answer questions has overcome executives of Anglia Polytechnic University.

In December 1995 Mr Jonathan Jenkins was appointed a lecturer in the university's Business School's department of management development. Mr Jenkins's father, Prof Hugh Jenkins, was then head of the department and is now head of the Business School.

Not long after Mr Jenkins junior started work, the authorities were plagued by a series of complaints about the young man's performance. The complaints, from support staff, business clients, students and colleagues, questioned the lecturer's teaching ability, his cancellation of lectures and his abrasive manner.

The young man, however, was not disciplined. On the contrary, his appointment was made permanent and he was awarded an MBA, Master of Business Administration, from the university. In a moving public ceremony, the son was handed the MBA scroll by his father.

In May 1997 the complaints against Jenkins junior were summarised in a memo to Jenkins senior from the head of the management development division, John Watts, a fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants. Almost at once disciplinary proceedings were initiated by Prof Jenkins: not against his son, about whom the complaints were made; but against Mr Watts, who passed on the complaints. The reason for these disciplinary proceedings is not clear, but almost at once Prof Jenkins sought to withdraw them. On 24 July, however, Prof Jenkins wrote to Mr Watts, concluding: "I do not see how you can continue as head of division".

NO ANSWERS: Mr Bennett and Prof Jenkins

In October, Prof Jenkins outlined a "new structure" in which John Watts's responsibilities for "managing resources" in the division were to be taken over by a lecturer called David Evans, the only member of staff to attend (and speak at) the wedding of Jonathan Jenkins. This new structure is currently being resisted by almost the entire staff of the division, who still report to John Watts.

On 29 December the *Eye* sent Prof Jenkins a list of 11 questions about his son's appointment and qualifications, the complaints about him and the dispute with Mr Watts. The *Eye* asked what steps Prof Jenkins had taken to ensure there was no appearance of conflict of interest in the appointment of his son or his son's friend to posts under his control.

On 5 January Prof Jenkins replied that he was passing the questions to Mr Stephen Bennett, the university secretary. Mr Bennett has not answered them. A long, slightly testy conversation between the *Eye* and Mr Bennett ended with the following exchange which should be studied carefully by all students at Anglia Polytechnic University who are interested in open governance.

The Eye: That I have asked these questions in good faith and have not had a reply is on the record.

Mr Bennett: Well, I have asked you to let me have that information which you have which you believe this public body should be concerned about.

Q: Every bit of information that I have is contained in these questions.

A: In that case I'm not sure why we're having this conversation.

Q: I want to know the answers to the questions. The information may be false.

A: I understand that.

Q: Therefore I want to know the answers. But you're not giving them to me.

A: No.

ROGER AND OUT

£30,000 SAFE: Roger Ward

THERE was nothing more curious about Roger Ward's job as chief executive of the college employers than his leaving it. An Association of Colleges' board meeting on 13 January heard what it described as a "verbal interim report" from McKeag and Co, the Gosforth solicitors hired to conduct an inquiry into allegations of corrupt behaviour against Ward.

An amicable compromise was swiftly agreed. Ward leaves his post on 31 January with three months' pay in his pocket (about £30,000). His lawyers get £1,000 to help with legal costs, and he keeps his mobile phone and laptop. A statement from Graham Baskerville, AOC vice chairman, paid tribute to the "great change and modernisation in the further education sector" for which Ward was responsible.

Just a moment. The main allegation against Ward was that he had received payments from an insurance company whose services he peddled through the network of 450 colleges he represented, and then lied to *Private Eye* about the nature of these payments. Either he took such corrupt payments and lied about them or he didn't. If he didn't, he should continue in his job. If he did, he should have been sacked at least as arbitrarily as were all those lecturers whom his members sacked for insisting on decent contracts of employment.

So which was it? Mr Baskerville told the *Eye*: "This inquiry had gone on far too long. We thought it better to end the thing now rather than drag it out. We were assured there was nothing criminal here." He confirmed there would be no further inquiry.

A JOB FOR WIFE (again)

DONCASTER College has appointed a hostess (boss) for its spanking new conference centre at High Melton, built with no expense spared despite widespread redundancies and cuts at the college.

The job goes to Christine Gibbard, wife of the college's estates manager, Eric Gibbard, and an unswerving supporter of the principal, Terry Ashurst. The new centre offers the very best accommodation to delegates, including what Mr Ashurst calls an "expensive facility" in which they can get married. Meanwhile back at the college the work of clerk to the governors is still being carried out by Terry's own wife, Nina Ashurst, despite an assurance as long ago as last September that she would be resigning. The assurance came from Roger Ward, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, the college employers' body, who has contrived to lose his own job before Mrs Ashurst loses hers.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

I DO not see how the Inland Revenue investigators can do their work properly and impartially if they know that their minister of state is someone whose papers they will be examining and whom they may wish to interview."

These could have been the words used in the Commons last week by Tory MPs seeking to flush out the Minister for Tax Avoidance, Geoffrey Robinson. But they were not.

Instead they were spoken by the then Labour MP, now minister, Jeff Rooker during a December 1979 debate in which he called for the resignation of an earlier *Tory* treasury minister, Peter Rees. Rooker declared Rees's position was "untenable". Unlike Robinson, Rees merely had provided legal advice as a QC to the Rossminster tax avoidance group which was under investigation by the Revenue.

But that was then and this is now... Labour is in power and the beneficiaries of Robinson's holiday largesse, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, demonstrate the same head-in-sand support for the beleaguered paymaster-general as Margaret Thatcher showed towards Rees.

That the Revenue would normally be all over Robinson and his offshore Orion Trust like a rash is self-evident to tax experts. They point to the mounting evidence that has emerged indicating his influence on the Guernsey trustees. Furthermore, they say Robinson could be considered a settlor of some if not all the trust's £10m-plus assets.

If Robinson rather than his Belgian Mme Bountiful Joska Bourgeois were deemed to be a, or the, settlor of Orion Trust, it could be classed as resident for UK tax purposes. All of this would have been more than sufficient to justify Robinson and his advisers receiving a call from the tax inspector. But that is if he were a mere millionaire, not a treasury minister.

Any investigation of Robinson would need to be cleared by the Revenue at the highest level, possibly by the chairman, because of the political sensitivity and impact of it becoming public.

Political observers believe, for the Rooker reasons, it would be difficult if not impossible for Robinson to survive as a treasury minister a decision by the Revenue to mount an investigation. Once notified that the Revenue was on the case, it is felt Brown would have no alternative but to suggest that Robinson go.

Investigations of ministers by their own departments are rare. One, which Rooker used to beat up on Rees, involved Conservative home secretary Reginald Maudling. He resigned in 1972 after Scotland Yard began the investigation into his benefactor, architect and corrupter John Poulson. The home secretary is responsible for the Metropolitan Police. Maudling agreed with then prime minister Edward Heath "that it would not be appropriate for me to continue to hold this office while the investigations are being pursued". Maudling's decision was applauded by senior Labour MPs.

But of course that requires an investigation to start, and the suspicion is that the Revenue, while no doubt champing at the bit, is not about to embarrass its political masters. Especially as time is on its side, and making a claim against Robinson over Orion Trust would be far from easy. Perception alone is not sufficient. Tax investigators would need to prove a case that Orion was resident for UK tax from documents obtainable from Robinson or his accountants and lawyers. No information would be forthcoming from Guernsey. Any request for information to Orion's trustees could be safely filed in the dustbin. That's why you have offshore trusts.

The pathetic opposition MPs could have made much of this conflict of interest for a treasury minister and watched Robinson and his protectors squirm when they had the paymaster-general in their sights at treasury questions in the Commons on 15 January. The point was not even raised.

However, there is little doubt that the Revenue will be collating for future use the information that has emerged about how Robinson was involved in initiating and facilitating the acquisition by Orion of two blocks of shares in his engineering group TransTec and the purchase and sale of shares in Coventry City soccer club. Introducing assets to an offshore trust could make the introducer a "deemed settlor" of the trust and so taint its non-resident status, say offshore experts. Particularly if no fee were paid for the "suggestion" or introduction. Robinson has never said he was paid for "suggesting" these deals to a trust of which he is a discretionary beneficiary. Normally a fee would be payable. To the extent it was not, then Robinson added value to the trust and could be seen as a settlor.

The Revenue will be interested in new facts which have emerged about the Coventry deals that strengthen the view of tax experts that Robinson, contrary to his claim not to be able to influence the Orion trustees "in any way", is the man.

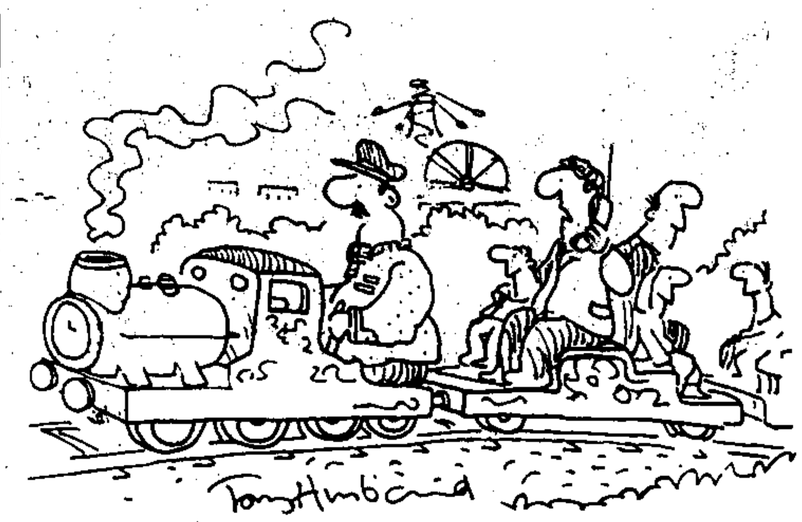
Orion initially acquired a 26 percent stake in the premiership club in May 1996, two months after Robinson joined the board and injected a £5m loan. These shares cost £1.24m. They came from offshore interests in Guernsey linked to club chairman Bryan Richardson and represented half the largest shareholding. In January 1997 Orion acquired a further 19 percent from the only other major shareholder, Derrick Robbins, who was anti-Richardson, for £350,000.

Five months later Orion unloaded most of these shares making a £184,000 tax free profit. A 10 percent stake was acquired for £371,000 by Warburgs merchant banker Derek Higgs. But a near 5 percent stake was simply transferred back to the Guernsey trustees linked to Richardson. Had Sphere Trustees paid the same price as Higgs, Orion would have netted a further £168,000 tax free. But instead Sphere paid just 50p for the entire parcel!

Why they should receive such a windfall is perhaps indicated by the effect this deal had on the Robinson/Richardson offshore shareholdings. Both Orion and Sphere now had an identical number of shares — 17,232 or 31 percent each. A parity presumably agreed before Robinson put in his £5m and before Robbins was bought out. Orion had warehoused the Robbins stake so as to restore the Robinson/Richardson equilibrium with Higgs taking up the excess shares.

Tax experts say that if Robinson were not a treasury minister the Revenue would ask some pointed questions about this Orion giveaway. Why should the other six discretionary beneficiaries (Robinson's family) give up £168,000 unless Robinson insisted. The minister has always insisted he could not speak for the other beneficiaries, so why seemingly was he able to do so? Why should the trustees agree to the giveaway unless they were indemnified against any future claim from the other members of the Guernsey Family Robinson? Did Robinson provide such an indemnity? Why should the trustees go along with any secret deal between Richardson and Robinson which cost Orion money unless they were so instructed? If Robinson was able to push through such an uncommercial deal — despite being unable to influence the trustees "in any way" — why does that not confirm that the supposed independent trustees do what he wants thereby making Orion liable for UK tax?

Whether or when the taxman gets the chance to put such questions to Robinson may well depend on whether, as seems increasingly likely, he is reshuffled to the Department of Timidity & Inaction to save face. Labour eventually achieved a similar transfer with Peter Rees. Coincidentally, he too was moved to the DTI.



"Hello... yah, I'm on a train..."

ASIL NADIR's pilot rescuer Peter Dimond may have tired of life in Northern Cyprus after almost five years on the run — though it is believed he has been back to Britain via Ireland prior to his most recent visit and arrest — but others still find the unrecognised Turkish-Cypriot extradition-free enclave a safe haven. David Hamilton, who flew in the plane with Nadir and Dimond, is still there on Nadir's tab. He is said to make visits using a Hong Kong passport.

However, veteran Dutch conman Walter Voss recently discovered there are risks when the law cannot or will not help your victims.

Voss was abducted, beaten, handcuffed, gagged and left to die in a riverbed last month by four German businessmen from whom he had taken DM900,000 (£300,000). Voss survived and is back in business. The Germans are still looking for their money. For some time Voss has been offering fictitious loans to desperate men from Voss & Partner Commercial Trust Corporation which has offices in Dublin and Croatia but is based in Northern Cyprus, along with other Voss & Partner entities. It is estimated he could have collected millions in fees.

Voss has been around the fraud track for 30 years. He is now 67 and has seen the inside of several prisons. His Intercambio offshore fund scam operated from Brighton until the DTI closed it down in 1971. Investors lost $10m. He still uses the Intercambio name. Voss was later arrested by the Germans and jailed by the Dutch, the last time for four years in 1991.

All of which goes to show — you can't keep a bad man down.

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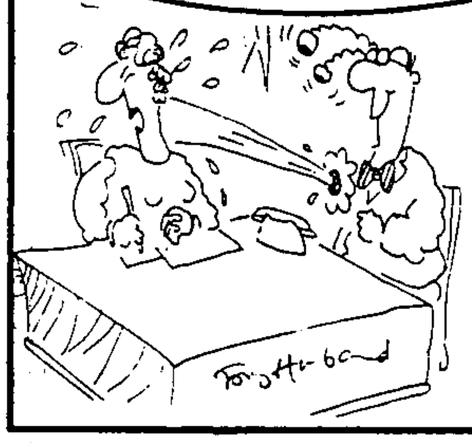

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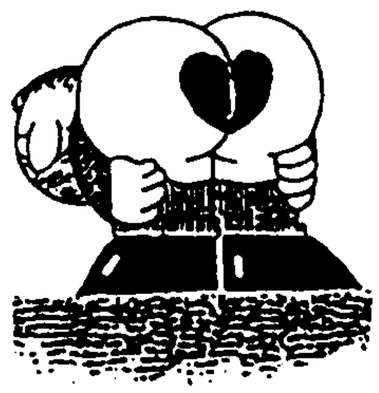

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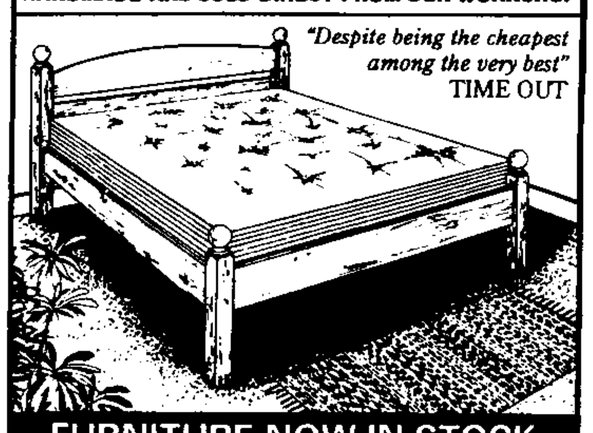

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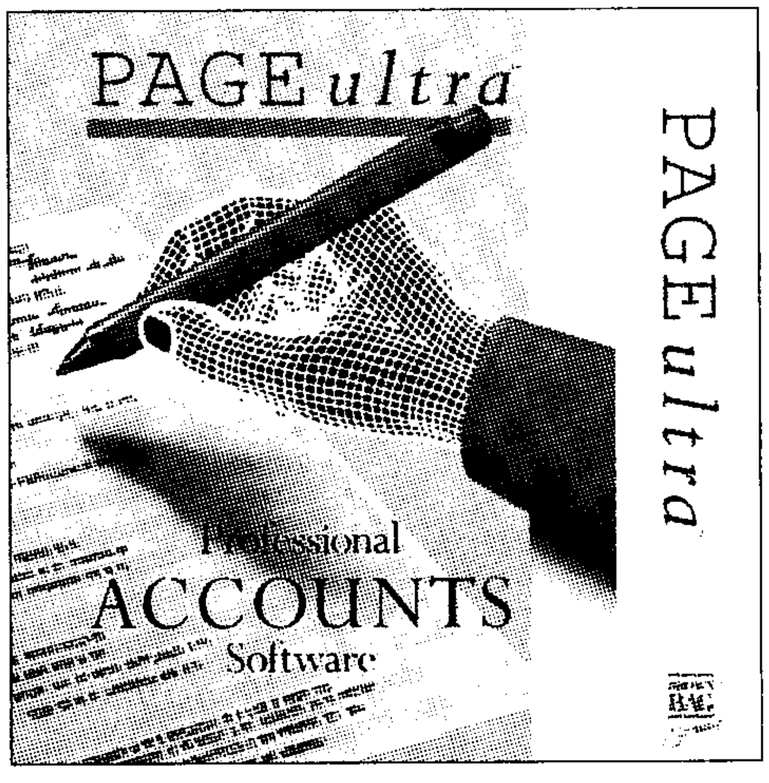

Security and Compatibility
PAGE*ultra* has an integrated multi-level data checking and corruption repair system to protect your data files. Because PAGE*ultra* is written in super fast C++ and the data files are in industry standard dBase (r), you get the best in both speed of operation and compatibility with all other major software programs.

Checklist
- Sales, purchase and nominal ledgers.
- Sales and purchase order processing.
- Powerful file anti-corruption system.
- Full bank reconciliation.
- Full UK and EC VAT (up to Intrastat).
- Automatic standing orders.
- Comprehensive choice of reports.
- Flexible job costing and estimate system.
- Up to 21 currencies of your choice.
- Industry standard dBase (r) format files.
- Single installation disk.

What's the Catch?
There is no catch. You may perpetually use a single user license of PAGE*ultra* for the cost of delivery and handling for free. There is no support - please call for network pricing (from £399 + VAT).

Yes, I would like to take advantage of your generous offer and enclose my cheque or credit card details (Mastercard, VISA, Switch, Delta, Diners, Amex).

Please send the following:

☐ The program disks. Handling charge @ £5.88

☐ The professionally produced manual + disks @ £45.88 (no support)

☐ Extended Support @ £116.33 (includes, disks, manual, 12 months support, low cost upgrades to Windows, OS/2 and Unix versions on release, any DOS upgrades during support period, program to fix accidentally corrupted files)

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

_____ Postcode _____

Daytime Telephone/Fax _____

Card No. _____

Expiry Date _____

Issue No. _____
(Switch)

Start Date _____
(Switch/Diners)

Atlantic Coast PLC Station Rd Colyton Devon EX13 6HA Tel 07000-BUYMEE BROWN BAG Software Telephone 01297 552222 Fax 01297 553366 Email sales@atlantic-coast.com

If you want to improve your social life and are thinking about joining an Introduction Agency – it all comes down to . . .

Making the right choice

With over eight million single men and women in the UK* between the ages of 18 and 64 you might have thought it would be easy to meet someone special. However, people usually meet at work or within the confines of their social circle and even though you may have an interesting job and a busy social life a compatible partner could still be difficult to find.

In terms of cost, service and the number of people you can meet, Dateline provides real value for money – probably the best investment in your social life and future you could ever wish to make. Don't just take our word for it, just complete this free test questionnaire and see for yourself how our unique and successful formula could easily be put to work for you.

* Government Survey

You will receive in the strictest confidence, entirely free of charge and with no obligation: The name and brief description of someone who could be your perfect partner, our full colour brochure and a copy of our popular paperback book *"All You Need Is Love"*.

For your *free* test

send this questionnaire *(along with 3 first class stamps)* to:
Dateline 25 Abingdon Road,
London W8 6AL
for information call us on
01869 324 100
Fax: 01869 324 529

or visit our website
www.dateline.uk.com

1. Personal Information

Mr ❒ Mrs ❒ Miss ❒ Ms ❒

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Post Code _____

I am seriously interested in meeting someone through Dateline.

Marital Status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒
Widowed ❒ Separated ❒

Age: Height:

Occupation:

Religion:

Build: Slight ❒ Medium ❒ Large ❒

Attractiveness: Very attractive ❒ Attractive ❒ Average ❒

2. Education

Private / Public ❒ Grammar ❒
Comprehensive ❒ Sec. Modern ❒

O Levels / GCSE's ❒ A levels ❒
Further Education ❒
University / Professional Equivalent ❒
Technical Qualification ❒

3. Your Personality

(tick which traits closely describe you)

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

4. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank)

❒ Do you involve yourself with community activities?
❒ Are you looking for one special relationship?
❒ Does your work make it difficult to meet new people?
❒ Do you want to extend your social life as well as finding a special relationship?
❒ Do you devote a lot of time to your social life?

5. Your interests

(sections 5. and 6. Please tick for a like, cross for dislike or leave blank for no preference.)

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
❒ Pubs ❒ Classical music
❒ Sports/Keep fit ❒ Theatre/Arts
❒ Politics/History ❒ Watching TV
❒ Reading ❒ Smoking
❒ Travelling ❒ Astrology
❒ Science/Tech ❒ Children
❒ Cinema ❒ Homemaking
❒ Pets/Animals ❒ Gardening
❒ Pop music ❒ Countryside

6. Details of your ideal partner

Minimum age: Maximum age:

Height: min. max. Don't mind ❒

Marital status:

Single ❒ Divorced ❒
Widowed ❒ Separated ❒
Don't mind ❒

Build: Slight ❒ Medium ❒ Large ❒

Attractiveness: Very attractive ❒ Attractive ❒ Average ❒

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Dateline

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